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THE WRITINGS OF

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

JOURNAL

EDITED BY BRADFORD TORREY

I

1837–1846

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

ASIDE from the use Thoreau himself made of his Journal in writing his more formal works, the first extensive publication of the Journal material began in 1881 with "Early Spring in Massachusetts." This volume consisted of extracts covering the month of March and parts of February and April, arranged according to the days of the month, the entries for the successive years following one another under each day. It was edited by Thoreau's friend Mr. H. G. O. Blake, to whom the Journal was bequeathed by Miss Sophia Thoreau, who died in 1876. It was succeeded in 1884 by a volume entitled "Summer," which in reality covered only the early summer, and that, in turn, by "Winter" in 1887 and "Autumn" in 1892, all made by Mr. Blake on the same principle. These volumes, from the first to the last, were received with delight by the ever-increasing body of Thoreau's admirers, but they have served to whet rather than satisfy the appetite of readers, and it has long been evident that they ought not to stand alone as representing this important phase of Thoreau's activity. The publishers therefore gladly seized the opportunity afforded, when the Journal, on the death of Mr. Blake, passed into the hands of Mr. E. H. Russell of Worcester, who was desirous of giving it to the public in its entirety, and they at once made arrangements with him to bring it out *in extenso* as soon as the long labor of copying and comparing the manuscripts could be completed. As editor

the publishers have been so fortunate as to secure Mr. Bradford Torrey, who is eminently qualified to consider Thoreau both as a writer and as an observer of nature.

EDITOR'S PREFACE

CONCERNING this first practically complete printing of Thoreau's Journal it seems proper to make the following explanations, in addition to those contained in the Publishers' Note: —

1. It has been found necessary, if the Journal was to be of comfortable use by ordinary readers, to punctuate it throughout. Otherwise each reader would have been compelled to do the work for himself. A literal reproduction, like the literal reproduction of Milton's minor poems, for example, may some day be of interest to antiquaries and special students; but such an edition could never be adapted, more than the literal reproduction of Milton's manuscripts, to the needs of those who read for pleasure and general profit.

2. Certain things have been omitted; *i. e.*, incomplete sentences, where parts of pages have been torn out by the writer; long quotations, especially from Latin authors, entered without comment, as in a commonplace-book; Maine woods matter — "Chesuncook" and "The Allegash and East Branch" — already printed *in extenso* in the volume entitled "The Maine Woods;" a few long lists of plants, etc., recapitulating matter contained in the preceding pages; the word *ultimo*, or *ult.*, which in hundreds of instances is written where the context makes it plain that *instant* was the word intended; a proper name here and there, out of regard for the feelings of possible relatives or descendants of

the persons mentioned; guesses at the identification of particular plants, — willows, goldenrods, and the like, — often accompanied by tediously minute technical descriptions, the whole evidently meant as mere memoranda for the writer's possible future guidance, and believed to be of no interest now, even to the botanical reader.

3. In the case of passages which Thoreau had revised, mostly in pencil, the editor has commonly printed the original form when the amended one has been followed in already printed volumes. In other cases the amended version has been given. Corrections of error have always been allowed to stand, except that, where it is plain that the correction must have been made at a date later than that of the original entry, the correction has been printed as a footnote, without brackets.

4. The footnotes of the editor are always in brackets.

5. Where parts of the Journal have been printed in the author's books, the editor and his associate, as far as their knowledge has gone, have indicated the fact, citing first the present and then the Riverside edition, — thus: "*Week*, p. 305; Riv. 379." References to "Channing" are to "Thoreau, the Poet-Naturalist," by William Ellery Channing, new edition, edited by Mr. F. B. Sanborn. References to "Sanborn" are to "Henry D. Thoreau," by F. B. Sanborn, in the American Men of Letters.

6. The earlier manuscript volumes of the Journal, as we now have them, are evidently not the originals, but are made up of selections from volumes that appear to have been destroyed by the author.

It remains only to add the editor's very hearty acknowledgements to his associate, Mr. Francis H. Allen, who has overseen and verified the copying of the manuscript, an onerous task, and in every way, by counsel and labor, has facilitated, not to say made possible, the completion of the work.

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INTRODUCTION

THOREAU was a man of his own kind. Many things may be said of him, favorable and unfavorable, but this must surely be said first,—that, taken for all in all, he was like nobody else. Taken for all in all, be it remarked. Other men have despised common sense; other men have chosen to be poor, and, as between physical comfort and better things, have made light of physical comfort; other men, whether to their credit or discredit, have held and expressed a contemptuous opinion of their neighbors and all their neighbors' doings; others, a smaller number, believing in an absolute goodness and in a wisdom transcending human knowledge, have distrusted the world as evil, accounting its influence degrading, its prudence no better than cowardice, its wisdom a kind of folly, its morality a compromise, its religion a bargain, its possessions a defilement and a hindrance, and so judging of the world, have striven at all cost to live above it and apart. And some, no doubt, have loved Nature as a mistress, fleeing to her from less congenial company, and devoting a lifetime to the observation and enjoyment of her ways. In no one of these particulars was the hermit of Walden without forerunners; but taken for all that he was, poet, idealist, stoic, cynic, naturalist, spiritualist, lover of purity, seeker of perfection, panegyrist of friendship and dweller in a hermitage, freethinker and saint, where shall we look to find his fellow? It seems but the plainest statement of

fact to say that, as there was none before him, so there is scanty prospect of any to come after him.

His profession was literature; as to that there is no sign that he was ever in doubt; and he understood from the first that for a writing man nothing could take the place of practice, partly because that is the one means of acquiring ease of expression, and partly because a man often has no suspicion of his own thoughts until his pen discovers them; and almost from the first — a friend (Emerson or another) having given him the hint — he had come to feel that no practice is better or readier than the keeping of a journal, a daily record of things thought, seen, and felt. Such a record he began soon after leaving college, and (being one of a thousand in this respect as in others) he continued it to the end. By good fortune he left it behind him, and, to complete the good fortune, it is at last printed, no longer in selections, but as a whole; and if a man is curious to know what such an original, plain-spoken, perfection-seeking, convention-despising, dogma-disbelieving, wisdom-loving, sham-hating, Nature-worshipping, poverty-proud genius was in the habit of confiding to so patient a listener at the close of the day, he has only to read the book.

The man himself is there. Something of him, indeed, is to be discovered, one half imagines, in the outward aspect of the thirty-nine manuscript volumes: ordinary "blank-books" of the sort furnished by country shopkeepers fifty or sixty years ago, larger or smaller as might happen, and of varying shapes (a customer seeking such wares must not be too particular; one remembers Thoreau's complaint that the universal preoccupation

with questions of money rendered it difficult for him to find a blank-book that was not ruled for dollars and cents), still neatly packed in the strong wooden box which their owner, a workman needing not to be ashamed, made with his own hands on purpose to hold them.

A pretty full result of a short life they seem to be, as one takes up volume after volume (the largest are found to contain about a hundred thousand words) and turns the leaves: the handwriting strong and rapid, leaning well forward in its haste, none too legible, slow reading at the best, with here and there a word that is almost past making out; the orthography that of a naturally good speller setting down his thoughts at full speed and leaving his mistakes behind him; and the punctuation, to call it such, no better than a makeshift, — after the model of Sterne's, if one chooses to say so: a spattering of dashes, and little else.[1]

As for the matter, it is more carefully considered, less strictly improvised, than is customary with diarists. It is evident, in fact, from references here and there, that many of the entries were copied from an earlier pencilled draft, made presumably in the field, "with the eye on the

[1] In many cases the punctuation seems to be absolutely without significance; as if the writer had simply fallen into the habit of dropping dashes in an absent-minded way as he passed along. The following examples (the longest an extreme case) will show what is meant: —

"I heard from time to time — a new note."

"The *Equisetum sylvaticum* — there is now of a reddish cast."

"It is very difficult — to find a suitable place to camp near the road — affording — water — a good — prospect and retirement."

"Another alighted near — by — and a third a little further off."

object," while the work as a whole has been more or less carefully revised, with erasures, emendations, and suggested alternative readings.

As we have said, if a man wishes to know Thoreau as he was, let him read the book. One thing he may be sure of: he will find himself in clean, self-respecting company, with no call to blush, as if he were playing the eavesdropper. Of confessions, indeed, in the spicy sense of the word, Thoreau had none to make. He was no Montaigne, no Rousseau, no Samuel Pepys. How should he be? He was a Puritan of Massachusetts, though he kept no Sabbath, was seen in no church, — being very different from Mr. Pepys in more ways than one, — and esteemed the Hebrew scriptures as a good book like any other. Once, indeed, when he was thirty-four years old, he went to a "party." For anything we know, that (with a little sowing of wild oats in the matter of smoking dried lily-stems when a boy) was as near as he ever came to dissipation. And he did not like it. "It is a bad place to go to," he says, — "thirty or forty persons, mostly young women, in a small room, warm and noisy." One of the young women was reputed to be "pretty-looking;" but he scarcely looked at her, though he was "introduced," and he could not hear what she said, because there was "such a clacking." "I could imagine better places for conversation," he goes on, "where there should be a certain degree of silence surrounding you, and less than forty talking at once. Why, this afternoon, even, I did better. There was old Mr. Joseph Hosmer and I ate our luncheon of cracker and cheese together in the woods. I heard all he said, though

it was not much, to be sure, and he could hear me. And then he talked out of such a glorious repose, taking a leisurely bite at the cracker and cheese between his words; and so some of him was communicated to me, and some of me to him, I trust."

He entertains a shrewd suspicion that assemblies of this kind are got up with a view to matrimonial alliances among the young people! For his part, at all events, he does n't understand "the use of going to see people whom yet you never see, and who never see you." Some of his friends make a singular blunder. They go out of their way to talk to pretty young women *as such.* Their prettiness may be a reason for looking at them, so much he will concede, — for the sake of the antithesis, if for nothing else, — but why is it any reason for talking to them? For himself, though he may be "lacking a sense in this respect," he derives "no pleasure from talking with a young woman half an hour simply because she has regular features."

How crabbed is divine philosophy! After this we are not surprised when he concludes by saying: "The society of young women is the most unprofitable I have ever tried." No, no; he was nothing like Mr. Samuel Pepys.

The sect of young women, we may add, need not feel deeply affronted by this ungallant mention. It is perhaps the only one of its kind in the journal (by its nature restricted to matters interesting to the author), while there are multitudes of passages to prove that Thoreau's aversion to the society of older people taken as they run, men and women alike, was hardly less pronounced. In

truth (and it is nothing of necessity against him), he was not made for "parties," nor for clubs, nor even for general companionship. "I am all without and in sight," said Montaigne, "born for society and friendship." So was not Thoreau. He was all within, born for contemplation and solitude. And what we are born for, that let us be, — and so the will of God be done. Such, for good or ill, was Thoreau's philosophy. "We are constantly invited to be what we are," he said. It is one of his memorable sentences; an admirable summary of Emerson's essay on Self-Reliance.

His fellow mortals, as a rule, did not recommend themselves to him. His thoughts were none the better for their company, as they almost always were for the company of the pine tree and the meadow. Inspiration, a refreshing of the spiritual faculties, as indispensable to him as daily bread, that his fellow mortals did not furnish him. For this state of things he sometimes (once or twice at least) mildly reproaches himself. It may be that he is to blame for so commonly skipping humanity and its affairs; he will seek to amend the fault, he promises. But even at such a moment of exceptional humility, his pen, reversing Balaam's rôle, runs into left-handed compliments that are worse, if anything, than the original offense. Hear him: "I will not avoid to go by where those men are repairing the stone bridge. I will see if I cannot see poetry in that, if that will not yield me a reflection. It is narrow to be confined to woods and fields and grand aspects of nature only. . . . Why not see men standing in the sun and casting a shadow, even as trees? . . . I will try to enjoy them as animals, at least."

This is in 1851. A year afterward we find him concerned with the same theme, but in a less hesitating mood. Now he is on his high horse, with apologies to nobody. "It appears to me," he begins, "that to one standing on the heights of philosophy mankind and the works of man will have sunk out of sight altogether." Man, in his opinion, is "too much insisted upon." "The poet says, 'The proper study of mankind is man.' I say, Study to forget all that. Take wider views of the universe. . . . What is the village, city, state, nation, aye, the civilized world, that it should concern a man so much? The thought of them affects me, in my wisest hours, as when I pass a woodchuck's hole."

A high horse, indeed! But his comparison is really by no means so disparaging as it sounds; for Thoreau took a deep and lasting interest in woodchucks. At one time and another he wrote many good pages about them; for their reappearance in the spring he watched as for the return of a friend, and once, at least, he devoted an hour to digging out a burrow and recording with painstaking minuteness the course and length of its ramifications. A novelist, describing his heroine's boudoir, could hardly have been more strict with himself. In fact, to have said that one of Thoreau's human neighbors was as interesting to him as a woodchuck would have been to pay that neighbor a rather handsome compliment. None of the brute animals, so called, — we have it on his own authority, — ever vexed his ears with pomposity or nonsense.

But we have interrupted his discourse midway. "I do not value any view of the universe into which man and

the institutions of man enter very largely," he continues. . . . "Man is a past phenomenon to philosophy." Then he descends a little to particulars. "Some rarely go outdoors, most are always at home at night," — Concord people being uncommonly well brought up, it would appear, — "very few indeed have stayed out all night once in their lives; fewer still have gone behind the world of humanity and seen its institutions like toadstools by the wayside."

And then, having, with this good bit of philosophical "tall talk," brushed aside humanity as a very little thing, he proceeds to chronicle the really essential facts of the day: that he landed that afternoon on Tall's Island, and to his disappointment found the weather not cold or windy enough for the meadow to make "its most serious impression;" also, that the staddles from which the hay had been removed were found to stand a foot or two above the water; besides which, he saw cranberries on the bottom (although he forgot to mention them in their proper place), and noticed that the steam of the engine looked very white that morning against the hillside.

All which setting of ordinary valuations topsy-turvy, the lords of creation below the beasts that perish, may lead an innocent reader to exclaim with one of old, "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?"

Nevertheless, we must not treat the matter too lightly, easily as it lends itself to persiflage. Even in this extreme instance it is not to be assumed that Thoreau was talking for the sake of talking, or merely keeping his hand in with his favorite rhetorical weapon, a paradox. That

desiderated "serious impression," at all events, was no laughing matter; rather it was to have been the chief event of the day; of more account to Thoreau than dinner and supper both were likely to be to his farmer neighbor. As for the woodchuck, its comparative rank in the scale of animal existence, be it higher or lower, is nothing to the purpose. For Thoreau it was simple truth that, on some days, and in some states of mind, he found the society of such a cave-dweller more acceptable, or less unacceptable, than that of any number of his highly civilized townsmen. Nor is the statement one to be nervously concerned about. Any inveterate stroller, the most matter-of-fact man alive (though matter-of-fact men are not apt to be strollers), might say the same, in all soberness, with no thought of writing himself down a misanthrope, or of setting himself up as a philosopher.

For one thing, the woodchuck is sure to be less intrusive, less distracting, than the ordinary human specimen; he fits in better with solitude and the solitary feeling. He is never in the way. Moreover, you can say to a woodchuck anything that comes into your head, without fear of giving offense; a less important consideration than the other, no doubt, woodchucks as a class not being remarkably conversable, but still worthy of mention. For, naturally enough, an outspoken freethinker like Thoreau found the greater number of men not so very different from "ministers," of whom he said, in a tone of innocent surprise, that they "could not bear all kinds of opinions," — "as if any sincere thought were not the best sort of truth!"

He walked one afternoon with Alcott, and spent an agreeable hour, though for the most part he preferred having the woods and fields to himself. Alcott was an ineffectual genius, he remarks, "forever feeling about vainly in his speech, and touching nothing" (one thinks of Arnold's characterization of Shelley as a "beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain," which, in its turn, may call to mind Lowell's comparison of Shelley's genius to a St. Elmo's fire, "playing in ineffectual flame about the points of his thought"), but after all, he was good company; not quite so good as none, of course, but on the whole, as men go, rather better than most. At least, he would listen to what you had to offer. He was open-minded; he was n't shut up in a creed; an honest man's thought would not shock him. You could talk to him without running up against "some institution." In a word, — though Thoreau does n't say it, — he was something like a woodchuck.

With all his passion for "that glorious society called solitude," and with all his feeling that mankind, as a "past phenomenon," thought far too highly of itself, it is abundantly in evidence that Thoreau, in his own time and on his own terms, was capable of a really human delight in familiar intercourse with his fellows. Channing, who should have known, speaks, a little vaguely, to be sure, of his "fine social qualities." "Always a genial and hospitable entertainer," he calls him. And Mr. Ricketson, who also should have known, assures us that "no man could hold a finer relationship with his family than he." But of this aspect of his character,

it must be acknowledged, there is comparatively little in the journal. What is very constant and emphatic there — emphatic sometimes to the point of painfulness — is the hermit's hunger and thirst after friendship; a friendship the sweets of which, so far as appears, he was very sparingly to enjoy. For if he was at home in the family group and in huckleberry excursions with children, if he relished to the full a talk with a stray fisherman, a racy-tongued woodchopper, or a good Indian, something very different seems to have been habitual with him when it came to intercourse with equals and friends.

Here, even more than elsewhere, he was an uncompromising idealist. His craving was for a friendship more than human, friendship such as it was beyond any one about him to furnish, if it was not, as may fairly be suspected, beyond his own capacity to receive. In respect to outward things, his wealth, he truly said, was to want little. In respect to friendship, his poverty was to want the unattainable. It might have been retorted upon him in his own words, that he was like a man who should complain of hard times because he could not afford to buy himself a crown. But the retort would perhaps have been rather smart than fair. He, at least, would never have acquiesced in it. He confided to his journal again and again that he asked nothing of his friends but honesty, sincerity, a grain of real appreciation, "an opportunity once in a year to speak the truth;" but in the end it came always to this, that he insisted upon perfection, and, not finding it, went on his way hungry. Probably it is true — one seems to divine a reason for it —

that idealists, claimers of the absolute, have commonly found their fellow men a disappointment.

In Thoreau's case it was his best friends who most severely tried his patience. They invite him to see them, he complains, and then "do not show themselves." He "pines and starves near them." All is useless. They treat him so that he "feels a thousand miles off." "I leave my friends early. I go away to cherish my idea of friendship." Surely there is no sentence in all Thoreau's books that is more thoroughly characteristic than that. And how neatly it is turned! Listen also to this, which is equally bitter, and almost equally perfect in the phrasing: "No fields are so barren to me as the men of whom I expect everything, but get nothing. In their neighborhood I experience a painful yearning for society."

It is all a mystery to him. "How happens it," he exclaims, "that I find myself making such an enormous demand on men, and so constantly disappointed? Are my friends aware how disappointed I am? Is it all my fault? Am I incapable of expansion and generosity? I shall accuse myself of anything else sooner." And again he goes away sorrowful, consoling himself, as best he can, with his own paradox, —

> "I might have loved him, had I loved him less."

Strange that he should have suffered in this way, many will think, with Emerson himself for a friend and neighbor! Well, the two men were friends, but neither was in this relation quite impeccable (which is as much as to say that both were human), and to judge by such hints as are gatherable on either side, their case was not

entirely unlike that of Bridget Elia and her cousin, — "generally in harmony, with occasional bickerings, as it should be among near relations;" though "bickerings" is no doubt an undignified term for use in this connection. It is interesting, some may deem it amusing, to put side by side the statements of the two men upon this very point; Emerson's communicated to the public shortly after his friend's death, Thoreau's intrusted nine years before to the privacy of his journal.

Emerson's speech is the more guarded, as, for more reasons than one, it might have been expected to be. His friend, he confesses, "was somewhat military in his nature . . . always manly and able, but rarely tender, as if he did not feel himself except in opposition. He wanted a fallacy to expose, a blunder to pillory, I may say required a little sense of victory, a roll of the drum, to call his powers into full exercise. . . . It seemed as if his first instinct on hearing a proposition was to controvert it, so impatient was he of the limitations of our daily thought. This habit, of course, is a little chilling to the social affections; and though the companion would in the end acquit him of any malice or untruth, yet it mars conversation. Hence no equal companion stood in affectionate relations with one so pure and guileless."

Thoreau's entry is dated May 24, 1853. "Talked, or tried to talk, with R. W. E. Lost my time, nay, almost my identity. He, assuming a false opposition where there was no difference of opinion, talked to the wind, told me what I knew, and I lost my time trying to imagine myself somebody else to oppose him."

It is the very same picture, drawn by another pencil,

with a different placing of the shadows; and since the two sketches were made so many years apart and yet seem to be descriptive of the same thing, it is perhaps fair to conclude that this particular interview, which appears to have degenerated into something like a dispute about nothing (a very frequent subject of disputes, by the way), was not exceptional, but rather typical. Without doubt this was one of the occasions when Thoreau felt himself treated as if he were "a thousand miles off," and went home early to "cherish his idea of friendship." Let us hope that he lost nothing else along with his time and identity.

But here, again, we are in danger of an unseasonable lightness. Friendship, according to Thoreau's apprehension of it, was a thing infinitely sacred. A *friend* might move him to petulance, as the best of friends sometimes will; but *friendship*, the ideal state shown to him in dreams, for speech concerning that there was nowhere in English, nor anywhere else, a word sufficiently noble and unsoiled. And even his friends he loved, although, tongue-tied New-Englander that he was, he could never tell them so. He loved them best (and this, likewise, was no singularity) when they were farthest away. In company, even in their company, he could never utter his truest thought. So it is with us all. It was a greater than Thoreau who said, "We descend to meet;" and a greater still, perhaps (and he also a Concord man), who confessed at fifty odd: "I doubt whether I have ever really talked with half a dozen persons in my life."

As for Thoreau, he knew at times, and owned as much

to himself, that his absorption in nature tended to unfit him for human society. But so it was; he loved to be alone. And in this respect he had no thought of change, — no thought nor wish. Whatever happened, he would still belong to no club but the true "country club," which dined "at the sign of the Shrub Oak." The fields and the woods, the old road, the river, and the pond, these were his real neighbors. Year in and year out, how near they were to him! — a nearness unspeakable; till sometimes it seemed as if their being and his were not two, but one and the same. With them was no frivolity, no vulgarity, no changeableness, no prejudice. With them he had no misunderstandings, no meaningless disputes, no disappointments. They knew him, and were known of him. In their society he felt himself renewed. There he lived, and loved his life. There, if anywhere, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him. Hear him, on a cool morning in August, with the wind in the branches and the crickets in the grass, and think of him, if you can, as a being too cold for friendship!

"My heart leaps out of my mouth at the sound of the wind in the woods. I, whose life was but yesterday so desultory and shallow, suddenly recover my spirits, my spirituality, through my hearing. . . . Ah! if I could so live that there should be no desultory moments . . . I would walk, I would sit and sleep, with natural piety. What if I could pray aloud, or to myself, as I went along by the brookside, a cheerful prayer, like the birds! For joy I could embrace the earth. I shall delight to be buried in it. And then, to think of those I love among men, who will know that I love them, though I tell them

not. . . . I thank you, God. I do not deserve anything; I am unworthy of the least regard; and yet the world is gilded for my delight, and holidays are prepared for me, and my path is strewn with flowers. . . . O keep my senses pure!"

Highly characteristic is that concluding ejaculation. For Thoreau the five senses were not organs or means of sensuous gratification, but the five gateways of the soul. He would have them open and undefiled. Upon that point no man was ever more insistent. Above all, no sense must be pampered; else it would lose its native freshness and delicacy, and so its diviner use. That way lay perdition. When a woman came to Concord to lecture, and Thoreau carried her manuscript to the hall for her, wrapped in its owner's handkerchief, he complained twenty-four hours afterward that his pocket "still exhaled cologne." Faint, elusive outdoor odors were not only a continual delight to him, but a positive means of grace.

So, too, he would rather not see any of the scenic wonders of the world. Only let his sense of beauty remain uncorrupted, and he could trust his Musketaquid meadows, and the low hills round about, to feed and satisfy him forever.

Because of his jealousy in this regard, partly, — and partly from ignorance, it may be, just as some of his respectable village acquaintances would have found the Iliad, of which he talked so much, duller than death in comparison with the works of Mr. Sylvanus Cobb, — he often spoke in slighting terms of operas and all the more elaborate forms of music. The ear, he thought, if it

were kept innocent, would find satisfaction in the very simplest of musical sounds. For himself, there was no language extravagant enough to express his rapturous delight in them. Now "all the romance of his youthfulest moment" came flooding back upon him, and anon he was carried away till he "looked under the lids of Time," — all by the humming of telegraph-wires or, at night especially, by the distant baying of a hound.

To the modern "musical person" certain of his confessions under this head are of a character to excite mirth. He is "much indebted," for instance, to a neighbor "who will now and then, in the intervals of his work, draw forth a few strains from his accordion." The neighbor is only a learner, but, says Thoreau, "I find when his strains cease that I have been elevated." His daily philosophy is all of a piece, one perceives: plain fare, plain clothes, plain company, a hut in the woods, an old book, — and for inspiration the notes of a neighbor's accordion.

More than once, too, he acknowledges his obligation to that famous rural entertainer and civilizer, the hand-organ. "All Vienna" could not do more for him, he ventures to think. "It is perhaps the best instrumental music that we have," he observes; which can hardly have been true, even in Concord, one prefers to believe, while admitting the possibility. If it is heard far enough away, he goes on, so that the creaking of the machinery is lost, "it serves the grandest use for me, — it deepens my existence."

We smile, of course, as in duty bound, at so artless an avowal; but, having smiled, we are bound also to render

our opinion that the most *blasé* concert-goer, if he be a man of native sensibility, will readily enough discern what Thoreau has in mind, and with equal readiness will concede to it a measure of reasonableness; for he will have the witness in himself that the effect of music upon the soul depends as much upon the temper of the soul as upon the perfection of the instrument. One day a simple air, simply sung or played, will land him in heaven; and another day the best efforts of the full symphony orchestra will leave him in the mire. And after all, it is possibly better, albeit in "poorer taste," to be transported by the wheezing of an accordion than to be bored by finer music. As for Thoreau, he studied to be a master of the art of living; and in the practice of that art, as of any other, it is the glory of the artist to achieve extraordinary results by ordinary means. To have one's existence deepened — there cannot be many things more desirable than that; and as between our unsophisticated recluse and the average "musical person" aforesaid, the case is perhaps not so one-sided as at first sight it looks; or, if it be, the odds are possibly not always on the side of what seems the greater opportunity.

His life, the quality of his life, that for Thoreau was the paramount concern. To the furthering of that end all things must be held subservient. Nature, man, books, music, all for him had the same use. This one thing he did, — he cultivated himself. If any, because of his so doing, accused him of selfishness, preaching to him of philanthropy, almsgiving, and what not, his answer was already in his mouth. Mankind, he was prepared to maintain, was very well off without such helps, which

oftener than not did as much harm as good (though the concrete case at his elbow — half-clad Johnny Riordan, a fugitive slave, an Irishman who wished to bring his family over — appealed to him as quickly as to most, one is glad to notice); and, however that might be, the world needed a thousand times more than any so-called charity the sight of a man here and there living for higher ends than the world itself knows of. His own course, at any rate, was clear before him: "What I am, I am, and say not. Being is the great explainer."

His life, his *own* life, that he must live; and he must be in earnest about it. He was no indifferent, no little-carer, no skeptic, as if truth and a lie were but varying shades of the same color, and virtue, according to the old phrase, "a mean between vices." You would never catch him sighing, "Oh, well!" or "Who knows?" Qualifications, reconciliations, *rapprochements*, the two sides of the shield, and all that, — these were considerations not in his line. Before everything else he was a believer, — an idealist, that is, — the last person in the world to put up with half-truths or half-way measures. If "existing things" were thus and so, that was no reason why, with the sect of the Sadducees, he should make the best of them. What if there *were* no best of them? What if they were all bad? And anyhow, why not begin new? It was conceivable, was it not, that a man should set his own example, and follow his own copy. General opinion, — what was that? Was a thing better established because ten thousand fools believed it? Did folly become wisdom by being raised to a higher power? And antiquity, tradition, — what were they? Could a blind

man of fifteen centuries ago see farther than a blind man of the present time? And if the blind led the blind, then or now, would not both fall into the ditch?

Yes, he was undoubtedly peculiar. As to that there could never be anything but agreement among practical people. In a world where shiftiness and hesitation are the rule, nothing looks so eccentric as a straight course. It must be acknowledged, too, that a man whose goodness has a strong infusion of the bitter, and whose opinions turn out of the way for nobody, is not apt to be the most comfortable kind of neighbor. We were not greatly surprised, lately, to hear an excellent lady remark of Thoreau that, from all she had read about him, she thought he must have been "a very disagreeable gentleman." It could hardly be said of him, as Mr. Birrell says of Matthew Arnold, who was himself a pretty serious person, and, after a way of his own, a preacher of righteousness, that he "conspired and contrived to make things pleasant."

Being a consistent idealist, he was of course an extremist, falling in that respect little behind the man out of Nazareth, whose hard sayings, by all accounts, were sometimes less acceptable than they might have been, and of whom Thoreau asserted, in his emphatic way, that if his words were really read from any pulpit in the land, "there would not be left one stone of that meeting-house upon another." Thoreau worshipped purity, and the every-day ethical standards of the street were to him an abomination. "There are certain current expressions and blasphemous moods of viewing things," he declares, "as when we say 'he is doing a good busi-

ness,' more profane than cursing and swearing. There is death and sin in such words. Let not the children hear them." That innocent-sounding phrase about "a good business" — as if a business might be taken for granted as good because it brought in money — was as abhorrent to him as the outrageous worldly philosophy of an old castaway like Major Pendennis is to the ordinarily sensitive reader.

He was constitutionally earnest. There are pages of the journal, indeed, which make one feel that perhaps he was in danger of being too much so for his own profit. Possibly it is not quite wholesome, possibly, if one dares to say it, it begets a something like priggishness, for the soul to be keyed up continually to so strenuous a pitch. In Thoreau's case, at all events, one is glad for every sign of a slackening of the tension. "Set the red hen to-day;" "Got green grapes to stew;" "Painted the bottom of my boat;" trivialities like these, too far apart (one is tempted to colloquialize, and call them "precious few," finding them so infrequent and so welcome), strike the reader with a sudden sensation of relief, as if he had been wading to the chin, and all at once his feet had touched a shallow.

So, too, one is thankful to come upon a really amusing dissertation about the tying of shoe-strings, or rather about their too easy untying; a matter with which, it appears, Thoreau had for years experienced "a great deal of trouble." His walking companion (Channing, presumably) and himself had often compared notes about it, concluding after experiments that the duration of a shoe-tie might be made to serve as a reasonably

accurate unit of measure, as accurate, say, as a stadium or a league. Channing, indeed, would sometimes go without shoe-strings, rather than be plagued so incessantly by their dissolute behavior. Finally Thoreau, being then thirty-six years old, and always exceptionally clever with his hands, set his wits seriously at work upon knots, and by a stroke of good fortune (or a stroke of genius) hit upon one which answered his end; only to be told, on communicating his discovery to a third party, that he had all his life been tying "granny knots," never having learned, at school or elsewhere, the secret of a square one! It might be well, he concludes, if all children were "taught the accomplishment." Verily, as Hosea Biglow did not say, they did n't know everything down in Concord.

More refreshing still are entries describing hours of serene communion with nature, hours in which, as in an instance already cited, the Spirit of the Lord blessed him, and he forgot even to be good. These entries, likewise, are less numerous than could be wished, though perhaps as frequent as could fairly be expected; since ecstasies, like feasts, must in the nature of things be somewhat broadly spaced; and it is interesting, not to say surprising, to see how frankly he looks upon them afterward as subjects on which to try his pen. In these "seasons when our genius reigns we may be powerless for expression," he remarks; but in calmer hours, when talent is again active, "the memory of those rarer moods comes to color our picture, and is the permanent paint-pot, as it were, into which we dip our brush." But, in truth, the whole journal, some volumes of which are carefully indexed

in his own hand, is quite undisguisedly a collection of thoughts, feelings, and observations, out of which copy is to be extracted. In it, he says, "I wish to set down such choice experiences that my own writings may inspire me, and at last I may make wholes of parts. . . . Each thought that is welcomed and recorded is a nest-egg by the side of which more will be laid."

A born writer, he is "greedy of occasions to express" himself. He counts it "wise to write on many subjects, that so he may find the right and inspiring one." "There are innumerable avenues to a perception of the truth," he tells himself. "Improve the suggestion of each object, however humble, however slight and transient the provocation. What else is there to be improved?"

The literary diarist, like the husbandman, knows not which shall prosper. Morning and evening, he can only sow the seed. So it was with Thoreau. "A strange and unaccountable thing," he pronounces his journal. "It will allow nothing to be predicated of it; its good is not good, nor its bad bad. If I make a huge effort to expose my innermost and richest wares to light, my counter seems cluttered with the meanest homemade stuffs; but after months or years I may discover the wealth of India, and whatever rarity is brought overland from Cathay, in that confused heap, and what seemed a festoon of dried apple or pumpkin will prove a string of Brazilian diamonds, or pearls from Coromandel."

Well, we make sure that whoever tumbles the heap over now, more than forty years after the last object was laid upon it, will be rewarded with many and many a jewel. Here, for his encouragement, are half a dozen

out of the goodly number that one customer has lately turned up, in a hasty rummaging of the counter: —

"When a dog runs at you, whistle for him."

"We must be at the helm at least once a day; we must feel the tiller rope in our hands, and know that if we sail, we steer."

"In composition I miss the hue of the mind."

"After the era of youth is past, the knowledge of ourselves is an alloy that spoils our satisfactions."

"How vain it is to sit down to write when you have not stood up to live."

"Silence is of various depths and fertility, like soil."

"Praise should be spoken as simply and naturally as a flower emits its fragrance."

Here, again, is a mere nothing, a momentary impression caught, in ball-players' language, on the fly; nothing like a pearl from Coromandel, if you will, but at the worst a toothsome bite out of a wild New England apple. It is winter. "I saw a team come out of a path in the woods," says Thoreau, "as though it had never gone in, but belonged there, and only came out like Elisha's bears." There will be few country-bred Yankee boys, we imagine, who will not remember to have experienced something precisely like that, under precisely the same circumstances, though it never occurred to them to put the feeling into words, much less to preserve it in a drop of ink. That is one of the good things that a writer does for us. And our country-bred boy, if we mistake not, is likely to consider this one careless sentence of Thoreau, which adds not a cent's worth to the sum of what is called human knowledge, as of

more value than any dozen pages of his painstaking botanical records.

Thoreau the naturalist appears in the journal, not as a master, but as a learner. It could hardly be otherwise, of course, a journal being what it is. There we see him conning by himself his daily lesson, correcting yesterday by to-day, and to-day by to-morrow, progressing, like every scholar, over the stepping-stones of his own mistakes. Of the branches he pursued, as far as the present writer can presume to judge, he was strongest in botany; certainly it was to plants that he most persistently devoted himself; but even there he had as many uncertainties as discoveries to set down; and he set them down with unflagging zeal and unrestrained particularity. The daily account is running over with question-marks. His patience was admirable; the more so as he worked entirely by himself, with few of the helps that in this better-furnished time almost belie the old proverb, and make even the beginner's path a kind of royal road to learning. The day of "How-to-Know" handbooks had not yet dawned.

Of his bird-studies it would be interesting, if there were room, to speak at greater length. Here, even more than in botany, if that were possible, he suffered for lack of assistance, and even in his later entries leaves the present-day reader wondering how so eager a scholar could have spent so many years in learning so comparatively little. The mystery is partly cleared, however, when it is found that until 1854 — say for more than a dozen years — he studied without a glass. He does not buy things, he explains, with characteristic self-satisfac-

tion, till long after he begins to want them, so that when he does get them he is "prepared to make a perfect use of them." It was wasteful economy. He might as well have botanized without a pocket-lens.

But glass or no glass, how could an ornithological observer, whose power — so Emerson said — "seemed to indicate additional senses," be in the field daily for ten or fifteen years before setting eyes upon his first rose-breasted grosbeak? — which memorable event happened to Thoreau on the 13th of June, 1853! How could a man who had made it his business for at least a dozen years to "name all the birds without a gun," stand for a long time within a few feet of a large bird, so busy that it could not be scared far away, and then go home uncertain whether he had been looking at a woodcock or a snipe? How could he, when thirty-five years old, see a flock of sparrows, and hear them sing, and not be sure whether or not they were chipping sparrows? And how could a man so strong in times and seasons, always marking dates with an almanac's exactness, how could he, so late as '52, inquire concerning the downy woodpecker, one of the more familiar and constant of year-round birds, "Do we see him in the winter?" and again, a year later, be found asking whether he, the same downy woodpecker, is not the first of our woodland birds to arrive in the spring? At thirty-six he is amazed to the extent of double exclamation points by the sight of a flicker so early as March 29.

It fills one with astonishment to hear him (May 4, 1853) describing what he takes to be an indigo-bird after this fashion: "Dark throat and light beneath, and white

spot on wings," with hoarse, rapid notes, a kind of *twee, twee, twee*, not musical. The stranger may have been — most likely it was — a black-throated blue warbler; which is as much like an indigo-bird as a bluebird is like a blue jay, — or a yellow apple like an orange. And the indigo-bird, it should be said, is a common New-Englander, such as one of our modern schoolboy bird-gazers would have no difficulty in getting into his "list" any summer day in Concord; while the warbler in question, though nothing but a migrant, and somewhat seclusive in its habits, is so regular in its passage and so unmistakably marked (no bird more so), that it seems marvellous how Thoreau, prowling about everywhere with his eyes open, should year after year have missed it.

The truth appears to be that even of the commoner sorts of birds that breed in eastern Massachusetts or migrate through it, Thoreau — during the greater part of his life, at least — knew by sight and name only a small proportion, wonderful as his knowledge seemed to those who, like Emerson, knew practically nothing.[1]

Not that the journal is likely to prove less interesting to bird-loving readers on this account. On the contrary, it may rather be more so, as showing them the means and methods of an ornithological amateur fifty years

[1] Under date of June 9, 1854, we find him writing: "I should like to know the birds of the woods better. What birds inhabit our woods? I hear their various notes ringing through them. What musicians compose our woodland quire? They must be forever strange and interesting to me." Even the glass that he finally bought was not an opera-glass, but a "spy-glass" (monocular) so called, and must have been of comparatively little help in the identification of woodland species.

ago, and, especially, as providing for them a desirable store of ornithological nuts to crack on winter evenings. Some such reader, by a careful collation of the data which the publication of the journal as a whole puts at his disposal, will perhaps succeed in settling the identity of the famous "night-warbler;" a bird which some, we believe, have suspected to be nothing rarer than the almost superabundant oven-bird, but which, so far as we ourselves know, may have been almost any one (or any two or three) of our smaller common birds that are given to occasional ecstatic song-flights.[1] Whatever it was, it was of use to Thoreau for the quickening of his imagination, and for literary purposes; and Emerson was well advised in warning him to beware of booking it, lest life henceforth should have so much the less to show him.

It must be said, however, that Thoreau stood in slight need of such a caution. He cherished for himself a pretty favorable opinion of a certain kind and measure of ignorance. With regard to some of his ornithological mysteries, for example, — the night-warbler, the seringo-bird (which with something like certainty we may conjecture to have been the savanna sparrow), and others, — he flatters himself that his good genius had withheld their names from him that he might the better learn their character, — whatever such an expression may be supposed to mean.

He maintained stoutly, from beginning to end, that

[1] Once he saw it (August 3, 1858), and then it proved to be a Maryland yellow-throat. At other times it was almost certainly an oven-bird.

he was not of the ordinary school of naturalists, but "a mystic, a transcendentalist, and a natural philosopher in one;" though he believed himself, in his own words, "by constitution as good an observer as most." He will not be one of those who seek facts as facts, studying nature as a dead language. He studies her for purposes of his own, in search of the "raw material of tropes and figures." "I pray for such experience as will make nature significant," he declares; and then, with the same penful of ink, he asks: "Is that the swamp gooseberry of Gray now just beginning to blossom at Saw-Mill Brook? It has a divided style and stamens, etc., as yet not longer than the calyx, though my slip has no thorns nor prickles," and so on, and so on. Pages on pages of the journal are choke-full, literally, of this kind of botanical interrogation, till the unsympathetic reader will be in danger of surmising that the mystical searcher after tropes and symbols is sometimes not so utterly unlike the student of the dead language of fact. But then, it is one of the virtues of a journal that it is not a work of art, that it has no form, no fashion (and so does not go *out* of fashion), and is always at liberty to contradict itself. As Thoreau said, he tumbled his goods upon the counter; no single customer is bound to be pleased with them all; different men, different tastes; let each select from the pile the things that suit his fancy.

For our own part, we acknowledge, — and the shrewd reader may already have remarked the fact, — we have not been disinclined to choose here and there a bit of some less rare and costly stuff. The man is so sternly virtuous, so inexorably in earnest, so heart-set upon per-

fection, that we almost like him best when for a moment he betrays something that suggests a touch of human frailty. We prick up our ears when he speaks of a woman he once in a while goes to see, who tells him to his face that she thinks him self-conceited. Now, then, we whisper to ourselves, how will this man who despises flattery, and, boasting himself a "commoner," professes that for him "there is something devilish in manners," — how will this candor-loving, truth-speaking, truth-appreciating man enjoy the rebuke of so unmannered a mentor? And we smile and say Aha! when he adds that the lady wonders why he does not visit her oftener.

We smile, too, when he brags, in early February, that he has not yet put on his winter clothing, amusing himself the while over the muffs and furs of his less hardy neighbors, his own "simple diet" making him so tough in the fibre that he "flourishes like a tree;" and then, a week later, writes with unbroken equanimity that he is down with bronchitis, contenting himself to spend his days cuddled in a warm corner by the stove.

Trifles of this kind encourage a pleasant feeling of brotherly relationship. He is one of us, after all, with like passions. But of course we really like him best when he is *at* his best, — as in some outpouring of his love for things natural and wild. Let us have one more such quotation: "Now I yearn for one of those old, meandering, dry, uninhabited roads, which lead away from towns, which lead us away from temptation, which conduct us to the outside of earth, over its uppermost crust; where you may forget in what country you are travelling; where your head is more in heaven than your feet are on

earth; where you can pace when your breast is full, and cherish your moodiness. . . . There I can walk and recover the lost child that I am without any ringing of a bell."

For real warmth, when once the fire burns, who can exceed our stoic?

We like, also, his bits of prettiness, things in which he is second to nobody, though prettiness, again, is not supposed to be the stoic's "note;" and they are all the prettier, as well as ten times more welcome, because he has the grace — and the sound literary sense — to drop them here and there, as it were casually, upon a ground of simple, unaffected prose. Here, now, is a sentence that by itself is worth a deal of ornithology: "The song sparrow is heard in fields and pastures, setting the mid-summer day to music, — as if it were the music of a mossy rail or fence-post." Of dragon-flies he says: "How lavishly they are painted! How cheap was the paint! How free was the fancy of their Creator!" In early June, when woods are putting forth leaves, "the summer is pitching its tent." He finds the dainty fringed polygala (whose ordinary color is a lovely rose-purple) sporting white blossoms, and remarks: "Thus many flowers have their nun sisters, dressed in white." Soaring hawks are "kites without strings;" and when he and his companion are travelling across country, keeping out of the sight of houses, yet compelled to traverse here and there a farmer's field, they "shut every window with an apple tree."

Gems like these one need not be a connoisseur to appreciate, and they are common upon his counter. It

was a good name that Channing gave him: "The Poet-Naturalist."

But there are better things than flowers and jewels to be found in Thoreau's stock. There are cordials and tonics there, to brace a man when he is weary; eye-washes, to cleanse his vision till he sees the heights above him and repents the lowness of his aims and the vulgarity of his satisfactions; blisters and irritant plasters in large variety and of warranted strength; but little or nothing, so far as the present customer has noticed, in the line of anodynes and sleeping-powders. There we may buy moral wisdom, which is not only the "foundation and source of good writing," as one of the ancients said, but of the arts in general, especially the art of life. If the world is too much with us, if wealth attracts and the "rust of copper" has begun to eat into the soul, if we are in danger of selling our years for things that perish with the using, here we may find correctives, and go away thankful, rejoicing henceforth to be rich in a better coinage than any that bears the world's stamp. The very exaggerations of the master — if we call them such — may do us good like a medicine; for there are diseased conditions which yield to nothing so quickly as to a shock.

As for Thoreau himself, life might have been smoother for him had he been less exacting in his idealism, more tolerant of imperfection in others and in himself; had he taken his studies, and even his spiritual aspirations, a grain or two less seriously. A bit of boyish play now and then, the bow quite unbent, or a dose of novel-reading of the love-making, humanizing (Trollopean) sort, could

one imagine it, with a more temperate cherishing of his moodiness, might have done him no harm. It would have been for his comfort, so much may confidently be said, whether for his happiness is another question, had he been one of those gentler humorists who can sometimes see themselves, as all humorists have the gift of seeing other people, funny side out. But then, had these things been so, had his natural scope been wider, his genius, so to say, more tropical, richer, freer, more expansive, more various and flexible, more like the spreading banyan and less like the soaring, sky-pointing spruce, — why, then he would no longer have been Thoreau; for better or worse, his speech would have lost its distinctive tang; and in the long run the world, which likes a touch of bitter and a touch of sour, would almost certainly have found the man himself less interesting, and his books less rememberable. And made as he was, "born to his own affairs," what else could he do but stick to himself? "We are constantly invited to be what we are," he said. The words might fittingly have been cut upon his gravestone.

B. T.

HENRY D. THOREAU

GLEANINGS
OR WHAT TIME
HAS NOT REAPED
OF MY
JOURNAL

[The small manuscript volume bearing on its first fly-leaf the legend printed on the preceding page is evidently a transcript of unused passages in the early journals, and this is also the case with several succeeding small volumes. See note on page 342. The following mottoes occupy the next three pages of the book.]

"By all means use sometimes to be alone.
Salute thyself: see what thy soul doth wear.
Dare to look in thy chest; for 't is thine own:
And tumble up and down what thou find'st there.
Who cannot rest till he good fellows find,
He breaks up house, turns out of doors his mind."

HERBERT, *The Church Porch.*

"Friends and companions, get you gone!
'T is my desire to be alone;
Ne'er well, but when my thoughts and I
Do domineer in privacy."

BURTON, *Anatomy of Melancholy.*

"Two Paradises are in one,
To live in Paradise alone."

MARVELL, *The Garden.*

Henry David Thoreau in 1854, from the Rowse Crayon in the Concord Public Library

Henry David Thoreau in 1854, from the Horse Crayon in the Concord Public Library

THE JOURNAL OF HENRY DAVID THOREAU

I

1837

(ÆT. 20)

Oct. 22. "What are you doing now?" he asked. "Do you keep a journal?" So I make my first entry to-day.

SOLITUDE

To be alone I find it necessary to escape the present, — I avoid myself. How could I be alone in the Roman emperor's chamber of mirrors? I seek a garret. The spiders must not be disturbed, nor the floor swept, nor the lumber arranged.

The Germans say, "Es ist alles wahr wodurch du besser wirst."

THE MOULD OUR DEEDS LEAVE

Oct. 24. Every part of nature teaches that the passing away of one life is the making room for another. The oak dies down to the ground, leaving within its rind a rich virgin mould, which will impart a vigorous life to an infant forest. The pine leaves a sandy and sterile soil, the harder woods a strong and fruitful mould.

So this constant abrasion and decay makes the soil of my future growth. As I live now so shall I reap. If

I grow pines and birches, my virgin mould will not sustain the oak; but pines and birches, or, perchance, weeds and brambles, will constitute my second growth.[1]

SPRING

Oct. 25. She appears, and we are once more children; we commence again our course with the new year. Let the maiden no more return, and men will become poets for very grief. No sooner has winter left us time to regret her smiles, than we yield to the advances of poetic frenzy. "The flowers look kindly at us from the beds with their child eyes, and in the horizon the snow of the far mountains dissolves into light vapor." — Goethe, *Torquato Tasso.*

THE POET

"He seems to avoid — even to flee from us, —
To seek something which we know not,
And perhaps he himself after all knows not." — *Ibid.*

Oct. 26.

"His eye hardly rests upon the earth;
His ear hears the one-clang of nature;
What history records, — what life gives, —
Directly and gladly his genius takes it up:
His mind collects the widely dispersed,
And his feeling animates the inanimate.
Often he ennobles what appeared to us common,
And the prized is as nothing to him.
In his own magic circle wanders

[1] [*Week*, p. 375; Riv. 464.]

The wonderful man, and draws us
With him to wander, and take part in it:
He seems to draw near to us, and remains afar from us:
He seems to be looking at us, and spirits, forsooth,
Appear to him strangely in our places." — *Ibid.*

HOW MAN GROWS

"A noble man has not to thank a private circle for his culture. Fatherland and world must work upon him. Fame and infamy must he learn to endure. He will be constrained to know himself and others. Solitude shall no more lull him with her flattery. The foe *will* not, the friend *dares* not, spare him. Then, striving, the youth puts forth his strength, feels what he is, and feels himself soon a man."

"A talent is builded in solitude,
A character in the stream of the world."

"He only fears man who knows him not, and he who avoids him will soonest misapprehend him." — *Ibid.*

ARIOSTO

"As nature decks her inward rich breast in a green variegated dress, so clothes he all that can make men honorable in the blooming garb of the fable. . . . The well of superfluity bubbles near, and lets us see variegated wonder-fishes. The air is filled with rare birds, the meads and copses with strange herds, wit lurks half concealed in the verdure, and wisdom from time to time lets sound from a golden cloud sustained words, while

frenzy wildly seems to sweep the well-toned lute, yet holds itself measured in perfect time."

BEAUTY

"That beauty is transitory which alone you seem to honor." — Goethe, *Torquato Tasso.*

THE FOG

Oct. 27. The prospect is limited to Nobscot and Annursnack. The trees stand with boughs downcast like pilgrims beaten by a storm, and the whole landscape wears a sombre aspect.

So when thick vapors cloud the soul, it strives in vain to escape from its humble working-day valley, and pierce the dense fog which shuts out from view the blue peaks in its horizon, but must be content to scan its near and homely hills.

DUCKS AT GOOSE POND

Oct. 29. Two ducks, of the summer or wood species, which were merrily dabbling in their favorite basin, struck up a retreat on my approach, and seemed disposed to take French leave, paddling off with swan-like majesty. They are first-rate swimmers, beating me at a round pace, and — what was to me a new trait in the duck character — dove every minute or two and swam several feet under water, in order to escape our attention. Just before immersion they seemed to give each other a significant nod, and then, as if by a common understanding, 't was heels up and head down in the shaking of a duck's wing. When they reappeared, it was amus-

ing to observe with what a self-satisfied, darn-it-how-henicks-'em air they paddled off to repeat the experiment.

THE ARROWHEAD

A curious incident happened some four or six weeks ago which I think it worth the while to record. John and I had been searching for Indian relics, and been successful enough to find two arrowheads and a pestle, when, of a Sunday evening, with our heads full of the past and its remains, we strolled to the mouth of Swamp Bridge Brook. As we neared the brow of the hill forming the bank of the river, inspired by my theme, I broke forth into an extravagant eulogy on those savage times, using most violent gesticulations by way of illustration. "There on Nawshawtuct," said I, "was their lodge, the rendezvous of the tribe, and yonder, on Clamshell Hill, their feasting ground. This was, no doubt, a favorite haunt; here on this brow was an eligible lookout post. How often have they stood on this very spot, at this very hour, when the sun was sinking behind yonder woods and gilding with his last rays the waters of the Musketaquid, and pondered the day's success and the morrow's prospects, or communed with the spirit of their fathers gone before them to the land of shades!

"Here," I exclaimed, "stood Tahatawan; and there" (to complete the period) "is Tahatawan's arrowhead."

We instantly proceeded to sit down on the spot I had pointed to, and I, to carry out the joke, to lay bare an ordinary stone which my whim had selected, when lo! the first I laid hands on, the grubbing stone that was to

be, proved a most perfect arrowhead, as sharp as if just from the hands of the Indian fabricator ! ! !

SUNRISE

Oct. 30. First we have the gray twilight of the poets, with dark and barry clouds diverging to the zenith. Then glows the intruding cloud in the east, as if it bore a precious jewel in its bosom; a deep round gulf of golden gray indenting its upper edge, while slender rules of fleecy vapor, radiating from the common centre, like light-armed troops, fall regularly into their places.

SAILING WITH AND AGAINST THE STREAM

Nov. 3. If one would reflect, let him embark on some placid stream, and float with the current. He cannot resist the Muse. As we ascend the stream, plying the paddle with might and main, snatched and impetuous thoughts course through the brain. We dream of conflict, power, and grandeur. But turn the prow down stream, and rock, tree, kine, knoll, assuming new and varying positions, as wind and water shift the scene, favor the liquid lapse of thought, far-reaching and sublime, but ever calm and gently undulating.

TRUTH

Nov. 5. Truth strikes us from behind, and in the dark, as well as from before and in broad daylight.

STILL STREAMS RUN DEEPEST

Nov. 9. It is the rill whose "silver sands and pebbles sing eternal ditties with the spring." The early frosts bridge its narrow channel, and its querulous note

is hushed. Only the flickering sunlight on its sandy bottom attracts the beholder. But there are souls whose depths are never fathomed, — on whose bottom the sun never shines. We get a distant view from the precipitous banks, but never a draught from their mid-channels. Only a sunken rock or fallen oak can provoke a murmur, and their surface is a stranger to the icy fetters which bind fast a thousand contributory rills.[1]

DISCIPLINE

Nov. 12. I yet lack discernment to distinguish the whole lesson of to-day; but it is not lost, — it will come to me at last. My desire is to know *what* I have lived, that I may know *how* to live henceforth.

SIN DESTROYS THE PERCEPTION OF THE BEAUTIFUL

Nov. 13. This shall be the test of innocence — if I can hear a taunt, and look out on this friendly moon, pacing the heavens in queen-like majesty, with the accustomed yearning.

TRUTH

Truth is ever returning into herself. I glimpse one feature to-day, another to-morrow; and the next day they are blended.

GOETHE

Nov. 15. "And now that it is evening, a few clouds in the mild atmosphere rest upon the mountains, more stand still than move in the heavens, and immediately after sunset the chirping of crickets begins to increase; then feels one once more at home in the world, and not

[1] [*Week*, p. 314; Riv. 390.]

as an alien, — an exile. I am contented as though I had been born and brought up here, and now returned from a Greenland or whaling voyage. Even the dust of my Fatherland, as it is whirled about the wagon, which for so long a time I had not seen, is welcome. The clock-and-bell jingling of the crickets is very agreeable, penetrating, and not without a meaning. Pleasant is it when roguish boys whistle in emulation of a field of such songstresses. One imagines that they really enhance each other. The evening is perfectly mild as the day. Should an inhabitant of the south, coming from the south, hear of my rapture, he would deem me very childish. Alas! what I here express have I long felt under an unpropitious heaven. And now this joy is to me an exception, which I am henceforth to enjoy, — a necessity of my nature." — *Italiänische Reise.*[1]

PONKAWTASSETT

Nov. 16. There goes the river, or rather is, "in serpent error wandering," the jugular vein of Musketaquid. Who knows how much of the proverbial moderation of the inhabitants was caught from its dull circulation?

The snow gives the landscape a washing-day appearance, — here a streak of white, there a streak of dark; it is spread like a napkin over the hills and meadows. This must be a rare drying day, to judge from the vapor that floats over the vast clothes-yard.

A hundred guns are firing and a flag flying in the village in celebration of the whig victory. Now a short dull report, — the mere disk of a sound, shorn of its

[1] [*Week*, p. 352; Riv. 435, 436.]

beams, — and then a puff of smoke rises in the horizon to join its misty relatives in the skies.

GOETHE

He gives such a glowing description of the old tower, that they who had been born and brought up in the neighborhood must needs look over their shoulders, "that they might behold with their eyes, what I had praised to their ears, . . . and I added nothing, not even the ivy which for centuries had decorated the walls." — *Italiänische Reise.*[1]

SUNRISE

Nov. 17. Now the king of day plays at bo-peep round the world's corner, and every cottage window smiles a golden smile, — a very picture of glee. I see the water glistening in the eye. The smothered breathings of awakening day strike the ear with an undulating motion; over hill and dale, pasture and woodland, come they to me, and I am at home in the world.

THE SKY

If there is nothing new on earth, still there is something new in the heavens. We have always a resource in the skies. They are constantly turning a new page to view. The wind sets the types in this blue ground, and the inquiring may always read a new truth.[2]

VIRGIL

Nov. 18. "Pulsae referunt ad sidera valles"[3] is such

[1] [*Week*, p. 348; Riv. 430.] [2] [*Week*, p. 383; Riv. 473.]
[3] [*Week*, p. 417; Riv. 515.]

a line as would save an epic; and how finely he concludes his "agrestem musam," now that Silenus has done, and the stars have heard his story, —

> "Cogere donec oves stabulis, numerumque referre
> Jussit, et invito processit Vesper Olympo."

HARMONY

Nature makes no noise. The howling storm, the rustling leaf, the pattering rain are no disturbance, there is an essential and unexplored harmony in them. Why is it that thought flows with so deep and sparkling a current when the sound of distant music strikes the ear? When I would muse I complain not of a rattling tune on the piano — a Battle of Prague even — if it be harmony, but an irregular, discordant drumming is intolerable.

SHADOWS

When a shadow flits across the landscape of the soul, where is the substance? Has it always its origin in sin? and is that sin in me?

VIRGIL

Nov. 20. I would read Virgil, if only that I might be reminded of the identity of human nature in all ages. I take satisfaction in "jam laeto turgent in palmite gemmae," or "Strata jacent passim sua quaeque sub arbore poma." It was the same world, and the same men inhabited it.[1]

NAWSHAWTUCT

Nov. 21. One must needs climb a hill to know what a world he inhabits. In the midst of this Indian sum-

[1] [*Week*, p. 93; Riv. 116. *Excursions*, p. 138; Riv. 169.]

mer I am perched on the topmost rock of Nawshawtuct, a velvet wind blowing from the southwest. I seem to feel the atoms as they strike my cheek. Hills, mountains, steeples stand out in bold relief in the horizon, while I am resting on the rounded boss of an enormous shield, the river like a vein of silver encircling its edge, and thence the shield gradually rises to its rim, the horizon. Not a cloud is to be seen, but villages, villas, forests, mountains, one above another, till they are swallowed up in the heavens.[1] The atmosphere is such that, as I look abroad upon the length and breadth of the land, it recedes from my eye, and I seem to be looking for the threads of the velvet.

Thus I admire the grandeur of my emerald carriage, with its border of blue, in which I am rolling through space.

THOUGHTS

Nov. 26. I look around for thoughts when I am overflowing myself. While I live on, thought is still in embryo, — it stirs not within me. Anon it begins to assume shape and comeliness, and I deliver it, and clothe it in its garment of language. But alas! how often when thoughts choke me do I resort to a spat on the back, or swallow a crust, or do anything but expectorate them!

HOAR FROST AND GREEN RIVER

Nov. 28. Every tree, fence, and spire of grass that could raise its head above the snow was this morning covered with a dense hoar frost. The trees looked like airy creatures of darkness caught napping. On this side

[1] [*Week*, p. 373; Riv. 461.]

they were huddled together, their gray hairs streaming, in a secluded valley which the sun had not yet penetrated, and on that they went hurrying off in Indian file by hedgerows and watercourses, while the shrubs and grasses, like elves and fairies of the night, sought to hide their diminished heads in the snow.

The branches and taller grasses were covered with a wonderful ice-foliage, answering leaf for leaf to their summer dress. The centre, diverging, and even more minute fibres were perfectly distinct and the edges regularly indented.

These leaves were on the side of the twig or stubble opposite to the sun (when it was not bent toward the east), meeting it for the most part at right angles, and there were others standing out at all possible angles upon these, and upon one another.

It struck me that these ghost leaves and the green ones whose forms they assume were the creatures of the same law. It could not be in obedience to two several laws that the vegetable juices swelled gradually into the perfect leaf on the one hand, and the crystalline particles trooped to their standard in the same admirable order on the other.

The river, viewed from the bank above, appeared of a yellowish-green color, but on a nearer approach this phenomenon vanished; and yet the landscape was covered with snow.[1]

ICE-HARP

Dec. 5. My friend tells me he has discovered a new note in nature, which he calls the Ice-Harp. Chancing

[1] [*Excursions*, pp. 126, 127; Riv. 155, 156.]

to throw a handful of pebbles upon the pond where there was an air chamber under the ice, it discoursed a pleasant music to him.

Herein resides a tenth muse, and as he was the man to discover it probably the extra melody is in him.

GOETHE

Dec. 8. He is generally satisfied with giving an exact description of objects as they appear to him, and his genius is exhibited in the points he seizes upon and illustrates. His description of Venice and her environs as seen from the Marcusthurm is that of an unconcerned spectator, whose object is faithfully to describe what he sees, and that, too, for the most part, in the order in which he saw it. It is this trait which is chiefly to be prized in the book; even the reflections of the author do not interfere with his descriptions.

It would thus be possible for inferior minds to produce invaluable books.[1]

MEASURE

Dec. 10. Not the carpenter alone carries his rule in his pocket. Space is quite subdued to us. The meanest peasant finds in a hair of his head, or the white crescent upon his nail, the unit of measure for the distance of the fixed stars. His middle finger measures how many *digits* into space; he extends a few times his thumb and finger, and the continent is *spanned;* he stretches out his arms, and the sea is *fathomed.*

THOUGHT

Dec. 12. There are times when thought elbows her

[1] [*Week*, pp. 347, 348; Riv. 429, 430.]

way through the underwood of words to the clear blue beyond;

> "O'er bog, or steep, through strait, rough, dense, or rare,
> With head, hands, wings, or feet, pursues *her* way,
> And swims, or sinks, or wades, or creeps, or flies; . . ."

but let her don her cumbersome working-day garment, and each sparkling dewdrop will seem a "slough of despond."

PECULIARITY

When we speak of a peculiarity in a man or a nation, we think to describe only one part, a mere mathematical point; but it is not so. It pervades all. Some parts may be further removed than others from this centre, but not a particle so remote as not to be either shined on or shaded by it.

THORNS

No faculty in man was created with a useless or sinister intent; in no respect can he be wholly bad, but the worst passions have their root in the best, — as anger, for instance, may be only a perverted sense of wrong which yet retains some traces of its origin.[1] So a spine is proved to be only an abortive branch, "which, notwithstanding, even as a spine, bears leaves, and, in *Euphorbia heptagona*, sometimes flowers and fruit."

JACK FROST

Dec. 15. As further confirmation of the fact that vegetation is a kind of crystallization, I observe that upon

[1] [Later.] We must consider war and slavery, with many other institutions and even the best existing governments, notwithstanding their apparent advantages, as the abortive rudiments of nobler institutions such as distinguish man in his savage and half-civilized state.

the edge of the melting frost on the windows, Jack is playing singular freaks, — now bundling together his needle-shaped leaves so as to resemble fields waving with grain, or shocks of wheat rising here and there from the stubble. On one side the vegetation of the torrid zone is presented you, — high-towering palms, and wide-spread banyans, such as we see in pictures of Oriental scenery; on the other are arctic pines, stiff-frozen, with branches downcast, like the arms of tender men in frosty weather.[1] In some instances the panes are covered with little feathery flocks, where the particles radiate from a common centre, the number of radii varying from three to seven or eight. The crystalline particles are partial to the creases and flaws in the glass, and, when these extend from sash to sash, form complete hedgerows, or miniature watercourses, where dense masses of crystal foliage "high over-arched imbower."

FROZEN MIST

Dec. 16. The woods were this morning covered with thin bars of vapor, — the evaporation of the leaves according to Sprengel, — which seemed to have been suddenly stiffened by the cold. In some places it was spread out like gauze over the tops of the trees, forming extended lawns, where elves and fairies held high tournament;

> "before each van
> Prick forth the aery knights, and couch their spears,
> Till thickest legions close." [2]

[1] [*Excursions*, pp. 127, 128; Riv. 157.]

[2] [*Week*, p. 186; Riv. 231. *The Service*, Boston, 1902, p. 21].

The east was glowing with a narrow but ill-defined crescent of light, the blue of the zenith mingling in all possible proportions with the salmon-color of the horizon. And now the neighboring hilltops telegraph to us poor crawlers of the plain the Monarch's golden ensign in the east, and anon his "long levelled rules" fall sectorwise, and humblest cottage windows greet their lord.

FACTS

How indispensable to a correct study of Nature is a perception of her true meaning. The fact will one day flower out into a truth. The season will mature and fructify what the understanding had cultivated. Mere accumulators of facts — collectors of materials for the master-workmen — are like those plants growing in dark forests, which "put forth only leaves instead of blossoms."

DRUIDS

Dec. 17. In all ages and nations we observe a leaning towards a right state of things. This may especially be seen in the history of the priest, whose life approaches most nearly to that of the ideal man. The Druids paid no taxes, and "were allowed exemption from warfare and all other things." The clergy are even now a privileged class.

In the last stage of civilization Poetry, Religion, and Philosophy will be one; and this truth is glimpsed in the first. The druidical order was divided into Druids, Bards, and Ouates. "The Bards were the poets and musicians, of whom some were satirists, and some encomiasts. The Ouates sacrificed, divined, and contem-

plated the nature of things. The Druids cultivated physiology and moral philosophy; or, as Diodorus says, were their philosophers and theologians."

GOETHE

Dec. 18. He required that his heroine, Iphigenia, should say nothing which might not be uttered by the holy Agathe, whose picture he contemplated.

IMMORTALITY POST

The nations assert an immortality *post* as well as *ante*. The Athenians wore a golden grasshopper as an emblem that they sprang from the earth, and the Arcadians pretended that they were προσέληνοι, or before the moon.

The Platos do not seem to have considered this back-reaching tendency of the human mind.

THE PRIDE OF ANCESTRY

Men are pleased to be called the sons of their fathers, — so little truth suffices them, — and whoever addresses them by this or a similar title is termed a poet. The orator appeals to the sons of Greece, of Britannia, of France, or of Poland; and our fathers' homely name acquires some interest from the fact that Sakai-suna means sons-of-the-Sakai.[1]

HELL

Dec. 19. Hell itself may be contained within the compass of a spark.

[1] [A fanciful derivation of the word "Saxons"?]

SAXONS

The fact seems at first an anomalous one that the less a people have to contend for the more tenacious they are of their rights. The Saxons of Ditmarsia contended for a principle, not for their sterile sands and uncultivated marshes.

We are on the whole the same Saxons that our fathers were, when it was said of them, "They are emulous in hospitality, because to plunder and to lavish is the glory of an Holsatian; not to be versed in the science of depredation is, in his opinion, to be stupid and base."

The French are the same Franks of whom it is written, "Francis familiare est ridendo fidem frangere;" "Gens Francorum infidelis est. Si perjeret Francus quid novi faciet, qui perjuriam ipsam sermonis genus putat esse non criminis."

CRYSTALS

I observed this morning that the ice at Swamp Bridge was checkered with a kind of mosaic-work of white creases or channels; and when I examined the under side, I found it to be covered with a mass of crystallizations from three to five inches deep, standing, or rather depending, at right angles to the true ice, which was about an eighth of an inch thick. There was a yet older ice six or eight inches below this. The crystals were for the most part triangular prisms with the lower end open, though, in some cases, they had run into each other so as to form four or five sided prisms. When the ice was laid upon its smooth side, they resembled the

roofs and steeples of a Gothic city, or the vessels of a crowded haven under a press of canvas.

I noticed also that where the ice in the road had melted and left the mud bare, the latter, as if crystallized, discovered countless rectilinear fissures, an inch or more in length — a continuation, as it were, of the checkered ice.[1]

Dec. 22. About a year ago, having set aside a bowl which had contained some rhubarb grated in water, without wiping it, I was astonished to find, a few days afterward, that the rhubarb had crystallized, covering the bottom of the bowl with perfect cubes, of the color and consistency of glue, and a tenth of an inch in diameter.

CRYSTALS

Dec. 23. Crossed the river to-day on the ice. Though the weather is raw and wintry and the ground covered with snow, I noticed a solitary robin, who looked as if he needed to have his services to the Babes in the Woods speedily requited.

In the side of the high bank by the Leaning Hemlocks, there were some curious crystallizations. Wherever the water, or other causes, had formed a hole in the bank, its throat and outer edge, like the entrance to a citadel of the olden time, bristled with a glistening ice armor. In one place you might see minute ostrich feathers, which seemed the waving plumes of the warriors filing into the fortress, in another the glancing fan-shaped banners of the Lilliputian host, and in an-

[1] [*Excursions*, p. 128 ; Riv. 158.]

other the needle-shaped particles, collected into bundles resembling the plumes of the pine, might pass for a phalanx of spears.[1] The whole hill was like an immense quartz rock, with minute crystals sparkling from innumerable crannies. I tried to fancy that there was a disposition in these crystallizations to take the forms of the contiguous foliage.

REVOLUTIONS

Dec. 27. Revolutions are never sudden. Not one man, nor many men, in a few years or generations, suffice to regulate events and dispose mankind for the revolutionary movement. The hero is but the crowning stone of the pyramid, — the keystone of the arch. Who was Romulus or Remus, Hengist or Horsa, that we should attribute to them Rome or England? They are famous or infamous because the progress of events has chosen to make them its stepping-stones. But we would know where the avalanche commenced, or the hollow in the rock whence springs the Amazon. The most important is apt to be some silent and unobtrusive fact in history. In 449 three Saxon cyules arrived on the British coast, — "Three scipen gode comen mid than flode, three hundred cnihten." [2] The pirate of the British coast was no more the founder of a state than the scourge of the German shore.

HEROES

The real heroes of minstrelsy have been ideal, even when the names of actual heroes have been perpetuated.

[1] [*Excursions*, p. 128; Riv. 157, 158.]

[2] [*Familiar Letters*, Sept. 8, 1841.]

Frost Crystals

The real Arthur, who "not only excelled the experienced past, but also the possible future," of whom it was affirmed for many centuries that he was not dead, but "had withdrawn from the world into some magical region; from which at a future crisis he was to reappear, and lead the Cymri in triumph through the island," whose character and actions were the theme of the bards of Bretagne and the foundation of their interminable romances, was only an ideal impersonation.

Men claim for the ideal an actual existence also, but do not often expand the actual into the ideal. "If you do not believe me, go into Bretagne, and mention in the streets or villages, that Arthur is really dead like other men; you will not escape with impunity; you will be either hooted with the curses of your hearers, or stoned to death."

HOMESICKNESS

The most remarkable instance of homesickness is that of the colony of Franks transplanted by the Romans from the German Ocean to the Euxine, who at length resolving to a man to abandon the country, seized the vessels which carried them out, and reached at last their native shores, after innumerable difficulties and dangers upon the Mediterranean and Atlantic.

THE INTERESTING FACTS IN HISTORY

How cheering is it, after toiling through the darker pages of history, — the heartless and fluctuating crust of human rest and unrest, — to alight on the solid earth where the sun shines, or rest in the checkered

shade. The fact that Edwin of Northumbria "caused stakes to be fixed in the highways where he had seen a clear spring," and that "brazen dishes were chained to them, to refresh the weary sojourner, whose fatigues Edwin had himself experienced," is worth all Arthur's twelve battles.[1] The sun again shines along the highway, the landscape presents us sunny glades and occasional cultivated patches as well as dark primeval forests, and it is *merry* England after all.

Dec. 31. As the least drop of wine tinges the whole goblet, so the least particle of truth colors our whole life. It is never isolated, or simply added as treasure to our stock. When any real progress is made, we unlearn and learn anew what we thought we knew before. We go picking up from year to year and laying side by side the *disjecta membra* of truth, as he who picked up one by one a row of a hundred stones, and returned with each separately to his basket.

[1] [*Week*, p. 163; Riv. 203.]

II

1838

(ÆT. 20–21)

HEAVEN ON EARTH

Jan. 6. As a child looks forward to the coming of the summer, so could we contemplate with quiet joy the circle of the seasons returning without fail eternally. As the spring came round during so many years of the gods, we could go out to admire and adorn anew our Eden, and yet never tire.

SAXONS

Jan. 15. After all that has been said in praise of the Saxon race, we must allow that our blue-eyed and fair-haired ancestors were originally an ungodly and reckless crew.

WE MAKE OUR OWN FORTUNE

Jan. 16. Man is like a cork which no tempest can sink, but it will float securely to its haven at last. The world is never the less beautiful though viewed through a chink or knot-hole.

Jan. 21. Man is the artificer of his own happiness. Let him beware how he complains of the disposition of circumstances, for it is his own disposition he blames. If this is sour, or that rough, or the other steep, let him think if it be not his work. If his look curdles all hearts,

let him not complain of a sour reception; if he hobble in his gait, let him not grumble at the roughness of the way; if he is weak in the knees, let him not call the hill steep. This was the pith of the inscription on the wall of the Swedish inn: "You will find at Trolhate excellent bread, meat, and wine, provided you bring them with you!" [1]

HOAR FROST

Every leaf and twig was this morning covered with a sparkling ice armor; even the grasses in exposed fields were hung with innumerable diamond pendants, which jingled merrily when brushed by the foot of the traveller. It was literally the wreck of jewels and the crash of gems. It was as though some superincumbent stratum of the earth had been removed in the night, exposing to light a bed of untarnished crystals. The scene changed at every step, or as the head was inclined to the right or the left. There were the opal and sapphire and emerald and jasper and beryl and topaz and ruby.[2]

Such is beauty ever, — neither here nor there, now nor then, — neither in Rome nor in Athens, but wherever there is a soul to admire. If I seek her elsewhere because I do not find her at home, my search will prove a fruitless one.

ZENO

Feb. 7. Zeno, the Stoic, stood in precisely the same relation to the world that I do now. He is, forsooth, bred a merchant — as how many still! — and can trade and barter, and perchance higgle, and moreover he can

[1] [*Excursions*, p. 141; Riv. 173.] [2] [*Excursions*, p. 127; Riv. 156.]

be shipwrecked and cast ashore at the Piræus, like one of your Johns or Thomases.

He strolls into a shop and is charmed by a book by Xenophon — and straightway he becomes a philosopher. The sun of a new life's day rises to him, — serene and unclouded, — which looks over στοά. And still the fleshly Zeno sails on, shipwrecked, buffeted, tempest-tossed; but the true Zeno sails ever a placid sea. Play high, play low, — rain, sleet, or snow, — it 's all the same with the Stoic. "Propriety and decorum" were his Palinurus, — not the base progeny of fashion, but the suggestions of an experienced taste.

When evening comes he sits down unwearied to the review of his day, — what 's done that 's to be undone, — what not done at all still to be done. Himself Truth's unconcerned helpmate. Another system of book-keeping this than that the Cyprian trader to Phœnicia practiced!

This was he who said to a certain garrulous young man, "On this account have we two ears and but one mouth, that we may hear more, and speak less."

That he had talked concerned not our philosopher, but his audience; and herein we may see how it is more noble to hear than to speak. The wisest may apologize that he only said so to hear himself talk, for if he *heard* not, as well for him had he never spoken. What is all this gabble to the gabbler? Only the silent reap the profit of it.

SOCIETY

Feb. 9. It is wholesome advice, — "to be a man amongst folks." Go into society if you will, or if you are unwilling, and take a human interest in its affairs.

If you mistake these Messieurs and Mesdames for so many men and women, it is but erring on the safe side, — or, rather, it is their error and not yours. Armed with a manly sincerity, you shall not be trifled with, but drive this business of life. It matters not how many men are to be addressed, — rebuked, — provided one man rebuke them.

SMALL TALK

To manage the small talk of a party is to make an effort to do what was at first done, admirably because naturally, at your fireside.

INFLUENCE

Feb. 13. It is hard to subject ourselves to an influence. It must steal upon us when we expect it not, and its work be all done ere we are aware of it. If we make advances, it is shy; if, when we feel its presence, we presume to pry into its free-masonry, it vanishes and leaves us alone in our folly, — brimful but stagnant, — a full channel, it may be, but no inclination.

FEAR

All fear of the world or consequences is swallowed up in a manly anxiety to do Truth justice.

OLD BOOKS

Feb. 15. The true student will cleave ever to the good, recognizing no Past, no Present; but wherever he emerges from the bosom of time, his course is not with the sun, — eastward or westward, — but ever towards the seashore. Day and night pursues he his

devious way, lingering by how many a Pierian spring, how many an Academus grove, how many a sculptured portico! — all which — spring, grove, and portico — lie not so wide but he may take them conveniently in his way.

GREECE

Feb. 16. In imagination I hie me to Greece as to enchanted ground. No storms vex her coasts, no clouds encircle her Helicon or Olympus, no tempests sweep the peaceful Tempe or ruffle the bosom of the placid Ægean; but always the beams of the summer's sun gleam along the entablature of the Acropolis, or are reflected through the mellow atmosphere from a thousand consecrated groves and fountains; always her sea-girt isles are dallying with their zephyr guests, and the low of kine is heard along the meads, and the landscape sleeps — valley and hill and woodland — a dreamy sleep. Each of her sons created a new heaven and a new earth for Greece.

SUNDAY

Feb. 18. Rightly named Suna-day, or day of the sun. One is satisfied in some angle by wood-house and garden fence to bask in his beams — to exist barely — the live-long day.

SPRING

I had not been out long to-day when it seemed that a new Spring was already born, — not quite weaned, it is true, but verily entered upon existence. Nature struck up "the same old song in the grass," despite eighteen inches of snow, and I contrived to smuggle away a grin of satisfaction by a smothered "Pshaw! and is that all?"

Feb. 19. Each summer sound
Is a summer round.[1]

GOETHE

Feb. 27. He jogs along at a snail's pace, but ever mindful that the earth is beneath and the heavens above him. His Italy is not merely the fatherland of lazzaroni and maccaroni but a solid turf-clad soil, daily illumined by a genial sun and nightly gleaming in the still moonshine, — to say nothing of the frequent showers which are so faithfully recorded. That sail to Palermo was literally a plowing through of the waves from Naples to Trinacria, — the sky overhead, and the sea with its isles on either hand.

His hearty good-will to all men is most amiable; not one cross word has he spoken, but on one occasion, the post boy snivelling, "Signore, perdonate! quésta è la mia patria," he confesses, "to me poor northerner came something tear-like into the eyes."[2]

SPRING

March 1. March fans it, April christens it, and May puts on its jacket and trousers. It never grows up, but Alexandrian-like "drags its slow length along," ever springing, bud following close upon leaf, and when winter comes it is not annihilated, but creeps on mole-like under the snow, showing its face nevertheless occasionally by fuming springs and watercourses.

So let it be with man, — let his manhood be a more

[1] [*Excursions*, p. 112; Riv. 138.]
[2] [*Week*, pp. 347, 348; Riv. 429–431.]

advanced and still advancing youth, bud following hard upon leaf. By the side of the ripening corn let 's have a second or third crop of peas and turnips, decking the fields in a new green. So amid clumps of *sere* herd's-grass sometimes flower the violet and buttercup spring-born.

HOMER

March 3. Three thousand years and the world so little changed! The Iliad seems like a natural sound which has reverberated to our days. Whatever in it is still freshest in the memories of men was most childlike in the poet. It is the problem of old age, — a second childhood exhibited in the life of the world. Phœbus Apollo went like night, — ὁ δ' ἤιε νυκτὶ ἐοικώς. This either refers to the gross atmosphere of the plague darkening the sun, or to the crescent of night rising solemn and stately in the east while the sun is setting in the west.

Then Agamemnon darkly lowers on Calchas, prophet of evil, — ὅσσε δέ οἱ πυρὶ λαμπετόωντε ἐΐκτην, — such a fire-eyed Agamemnon as you may see at town meetings and elections, as well here as in Troy neighborhood.

A SUNDAY SCENE

March 4. Here at my elbow sit five notable, or at least noteworthy, representatives of this nineteenth century, — of the gender feminine. One a sedate, indefatigable knitter, not spinster, of the old school, who had the supreme felicity to be born in days that tried men's souls, who can, and not unfrequently does, say with Nestor, another of the old school: "But you are younger than I. For time was when I conversed with greater

men than you. For not at any time have I seen such men, nor shall see them, as Perithous, and Dryas, and ποιμένα λαῶν," or, in one word, sole "shepherd of the people," Washington.

And when Apollo has now six times rolled westward, or seemed to roll, and now for the seventh time shows his face in the east, eyes well-nigh glazed, long glassed, which have fluctuated only between lamb's wool and worsted, explore ceaseless some good sermon book. For six days shalt thou labor and do all thy knitting, but on the seventh, forsooth, thy reading.[1]

Opposite, across this stone hearth, sits one of no school, but rather one who schools, a spinster who spins not, with elbow resting on the book of books, but with eyes turned towards the vain trumpery of that shelf, — trumpery of sere leaves, blossoms, and waxwork, built on sand, that presumes to look quite as gay, smell quite as earthy, as though this were not by good rights the sun's day. I marked how she spurned that innocent every-day book, "Germany by De Staël," as though a viper had stung her; — better to rest the elbow on The Book than the eye on such a page. Poor book! this is thy last chance.

Happy I who can bask in this warm spring sun which illumines all creatures, as well when they rest as when they toil, not without a feeling of gratitude! whose life is as blameless — how blameworthy soever it be — on the Lord's Mona-day as on his Suna-day![2]

Thus much at least a man may do: he may not impose on his fellows, — perhaps not on himself. Thus

[1] [*Week*, p. 66; Riv. 82, 83.] [2] [*Week*, p. 66; Riv. 83.]

much *let* a man do: confidently and heartily live up to his thought; for its error, if there be any, will soonest appear in practice, and if there be none, so much he may reckon as actual progress in the way of living.

HOMER

The poet does not leap, even in imagination, from Asia to Greece through mid-air, neglectful of the fair sea and still fairer land beneath him, but jogs on humanly observant over the intervening segment of a sphere, —

ἐπειὴ μάλα πολλὰ μεταξύ
Οὔρεά τε σκιόεντα, θάλασσά τε ἠχήεσσα, —

for there are very many
Shady mountains, and resounding seas between.[1]

March 5. How often, when Achilles like one διάνδιχα μερμήριξεν whether to retaliate or suppress his wrath, has his good Genius, like Pallas Athene, gliding down from heaven, θυμῷ φιλέουσά τε, κηδομένη τε, stood behind him, and whispered peace in his ear![2]

Men may dispute about the fact whether a goddess did actually come down from heaven, calling it a poet's fancy, but was it not, considering the stuff that gods are made of, a very truth?

THE AGE OF HONEY

"And to them rose up the sweet-worded Nestor, the shrill orator of the Pylians,
And words *sweeter than honey* flowed from his tongue."[3]

[1] [*Week*, p. 96; Riv. 119, 120.] [2] [*Week*, p. 65; Riv. 81.]
[3] [*Week*, p. 96; Riv. 120.]

E'en in old Homer's day was honey sweet, — not yet is sour, — tickling the palate of the blind old man, forsooth, with fresher sweet; then, as now, whene'er from leaky jar or drivelling lips it daubed the festive board, proving a baneful lure to swarms of parasites, Homer's cotemporaries, but alas! like Phthian hero, vulnerable in heel.

WHAT TO DO

But what does all this scribbling amount to? What is now scribbled in the heat of the moment one can contemplate with somewhat of satisfaction, but alas! to-morrow — aye, to-night — it is stale, flat, and unprofitable, — in fine, is not, only its shell remains, like some red parboiled lobster-shell which, kicked aside never so often, still stares at you in the path.

What may a man do and not be ashamed of it? He may not do nothing surely, for straightway he is dubbed Dolittle — aye! christens himself first — and reasonably, for he was first to duck. But let him do something, is he the less a Dolittle? Is it actually something done, or not rather something undone; or, if done, is it not badly done, or at most well done comparatively?

Such is man, — toiling, heaving, struggling ant-like to shoulder some stray unappropriated crumb and deposit it in his granary; then runs out, complacent, gazes heavenward, earthward (for even pismires can look down), heaven and earth meanwhile looking downward, upward; there seen of men, world-seen, deed-delivered, vanishes into all-grasping night. And is he doomed ever to run the same course? Can he not, wriggling, screwing, self-exhorting, self-constraining,

wriggle or screw out something that shall live, — respected, intact, intangible, not to be sneezed at? [1]

March 6. How can a man sit down and quietly pare his nails, while the earth goes gyrating ahead amid such a din of sphere music, whirling him along about her axis some twenty-four thousand miles between sun and sun, but mainly in a circle some two millions of miles actual progress? And then such a hurly-burly on the surface — wind always blowing — now a zephyr, now a hurricane — tides never idle, ever fluctuating — no rest for Niagara, but perpetual ran-tan on those limestone rocks — and then that summer simmering which our ears are used to, which would otherwise be christened confusion worse confounded, but is now ironically called "silence audible," and above all the incessant tinkering named "hum of industry," the hurrying to and fro and confused jabbering of men. Can man do less than get up and shake himself?

COMPOSITION

March 7. We should not endeavor coolly to analyze our thoughts, but, keeping the pen even and parallel with the current, make an accurate transcript of them. Impulse is, after all, the best linguist, and for his logic, if not conformable to Aristotle, it cannot fail to be most convincing. The nearer we approach to a complete but simple transcript of our thought the more tolerable will be the piece, for we can endure to consider ourselves in a state of passivity or in involuntary action, but rarely our efforts, and least of all our rare efforts.

[1] ["Carlyleish" is written in the margin against this passage.]

SCRAPS FROM A LECTURE ON "SOCIETY" WRITTEN MARCH 14TH, 1838, DELIVERED BEFORE OUR LYCEUM, APRIL 11TH

Every proverb in the newspapers originally stood for a truth. Thus the proverb that man was made for society, so long as it was not allowed to conflict with another important truth, deceived no one; but, now that the same words have come to stand for another thing, it may be for a lie, we are obliged, in order to preserve its significance, to write it anew, so that properly it will read, Society was made for man.

Man is not at once born into society, — hardly into the world. The world that he is hides for a time the world that he inhabits.

That which properly constitutes the life of every man is a profound secret. Yet this is what every one would give most to know, but is himself most backward to impart.

Hardly a rood of land but can show its fresh wound or indelible scar, in proof that earlier or later man has been there.

The mass never comes up to the standard of its best member, but on the contrary degrades itself to a level with the lowest. As the reformers say, it is a levelling down, not up. Hence the mass is only another name for the mob. The inhabitants of the earth assembled in one place would constitute the greatest mob. The mob is spoken of as an insane and blinded animal;

magistrates say it must be humored; they apprehend it may incline this way or that, as villagers dread an inundation, not knowing whose land may be flooded, nor how many bridges carried away.

One goes to a cattle-show expecting to find many men and women assembled, and beholds only working oxen and neat cattle. He goes to a commencement thinking that there at least he may find the men of the country; but such, if there were any, are completely merged in the day, and have become so many walking commencements, so that he is fain to take himself out of sight and hearing of the orator, lest he lose his own identity in the nonentities around him.

But you are getting all the while further and further from true society. Your silence was an approach to it, but your conversation is only a refuge from the encounter of men; as though men were to be satisfied with a meeting of heels, and not heads.

Nor is it better with private assemblies, or meetings together, with a sociable design, of acquaintances so called, — that is to say of men and women who are familiar with the lineaments of each other's countenances, who eat, drink, sleep, and transact the business of living within the circuit of a mile.

With a beating heart he fares him forth, by the light of the stars, to this meeting of gods. But the illusion speedily vanishes; what at first seemed to him nectar and ambrosia, is discovered to be plain bohea and short gingerbread.

Then with what speed does he throw off his strait-jacket of a godship, and play the one-eared, two-mouthed mortal, thus proving his title to the epithet applied to him of old by Homer of μέροψ ἄνθρωπος, or that possesses an articulating voice. But unfortunately we have as yet invented no rule by which the stranger may know when he has culminated. We read that among the Finlanders when one "has succeeded in rendering himself agreeable, it is a custom at an assemblage for all the women present to give him on the back a sudden slap, when it is least expected; and the compliment is in proportion to the weight of the blow."

It is provoking, when one sits waiting the assembling together of his neighbors around his hearth, to behold merely their clay houses, for the most part newly shingled and clapboarded, and not unfrequently with a fresh coat of paint, trundled to his door. He has but to knock slightly at the outer gate of one of these shingle palaces, to be assured that the master or mistress is not at home.

After all, the field of battle possesses many advantages over the drawing-room. There at least is no room for pretension or excessive ceremony, no shaking of hands or rubbing of noses, which make one doubt your sincerity, but hearty as well as hard hand-play. It at least exhibits one of the faces of humanity, the former only a mask.

The utmost nearness to which men approach each other amounts barely to a mechanical contact. As

when you rub two stones together, though they emit an audible sound, yet do they not actually touch each other.

In obedience to an instinct of their nature men have pitched their cabins and planted corn and potatoes within speaking distance of one another, and so formed towns and villages, but they have not associated, they have only assembled, and society has signified only a *convention* of men.

When I think of a playhouse, it is as if we had not time to appreciate the follies of the day in detail as they occur, and so devoted an hour of our evening to laughing or crying at them in the lump. Despairing of a more perfect intercourse, or perhaps never dreaming that such is desirable, or at least possible, we are contented to act our part in what deserves to be called the great farce, not drama, of life, like pitiful and mercenary stock actors whose business it is to keep up the semblance of a stage.

Our least deed, like the young of the land crab, wends its way to the sea of cause and effect as soon as born, and makes a drop there to eternity.

Let ours be like the meeting of two planets, not hastening to confound their jarring spheres, but drawn together by the influence of a subtile attraction, soon to roll diverse in their respective orbits, from this their perigee, or point of nearest approach.

If thy neighbor hail thee to inquire how goes the world, feel thyself put to thy trumps to return a true and explicit answer. Plant the feet firmly, and, will he nill he, dole out to him with strict and conscientious impartiality his modicum of a response.

Let not society be the element in which you swim, or are tossed about at the mercy of the waves, but be rather a strip of firm land running out into the sea, whose base is daily washed by the tide, but whose summit only the spring tide can reach.

But after all, such a morsel of society as this will not satisfy a man. But like those women of Malamocco and Pelestrina, who when their husbands are fishing at sea, repair to the shore and sing their shrill songs at evening, till they hear the voices of their husbands in reply borne to them over the water, so go we about indefatigably, chanting our stanza of the lay, and awaiting the response of a kindred soul out of the distance.

THE INDIAN AXE

April 1. The Indian must have possessed no small share of vital energy to have rubbed industriously stone upon stone for long months till at length he had rubbed out an axe or pestle, — as though he had said in the face of the constant flux of things, I at least will live an enduring life.

April 8. FRIENDSHIP

I think awhile of Love, and, while I think,
Love is to me a world,

Sole meat and sweetest drink,
And close connecting link
'Tween heaven and earth.

I only know it is, not how or why,
My greatest happiness;
However hard I try,
Not if I were to die,
Can I explain.

I fain would ask my friend how it can be,
But, when the time arrives,
Then Love is more lovely
Than anything to me,
And so I'm dumb.

For, if the truth were known, Love cannot speak,
But only thinks and does;
Though surely out 't will leak
Without the help of Greek,
Or any tongue.

A man may love the truth and practice it,
Beauty he may admire,
And goodness not omit,
As much as may befit
To reverence.

But only when these three together meet,
As they always incline,
And make one soul the seat

And favorite retreat
Of loveliness;

When under kindred shape, like loves and hates
And a kindred nature,
Proclaim us to be mates,
Exposed to equal fates
Eternally;

And each may other help, and service do,
Drawing Love's bands more tight,
Service he ne'er shall rue
While one and one make two,
And two are one;

In such case only doth man fully prove,
Fully as man can do,
What power there is in Love
His inmost soul to move
Resistlessly.

Two sturdy oaks I mean, which side by side
Withstand the winter's storm,
And, spite of wind and tide,
Grow up the meadow's pride,
For both are strong.

Above they barely touch, but, undermined
Down to their deepest source,
Admiring you shall find

Their roots are intertwined
Insep'rably.

CONVERSATION

April 15. Thomas Fuller relates that "in Merionethshire, in Wales, there are high mountains, whose hanging tops come so close together that shepherds on the tops of several hills may audibly talk together, yet will it be a day's journey for their bodies to meet, so vast is the hollowness of the valleys betwixt them." As much may be said in a moral sense of our intercourse in the plains, for, though we may audibly converse together, yet is there so vast a gulf of hollowness between that we are actually many days' journey from a veritable communication.

STEAMSHIPS

April 24. Men have been contriving new means and modes of motion. Steamships have been westering during these late days and nights on the Atlantic waves, — the fuglers of a new evolution to this generation. Meanwhile plants spring silently by the brooksides, and the grim woods wave indifferent; the earth emits no howl, pot on fire simmers and seethes, and men go about their business.

April 26. THE BLUEBIRDS

In the midst of the poplar that stands by our door
We planted a bluebird box,
And we hoped before the summer was o'er
A transient pair to coax.

One warm summer's day the bluebirds came
And lighted on our tree,
But at first the wand'rers were not so tame
But they were afraid of me.

They seemed to come from the distant south,
Just over the Walden wood,
And they skimmed it along with open mouth
Close by where the bellows stood.

Warbling they swept round the distant cliff,
And they warbled it over the lea,
And over the blacksmith's shop in a jiff
Did they come warbling to me.

They came and sat on the box's top
Without looking into the hole,
And only from this side to that did they hop,
As 't were a common well-pole.

Methinks I had never seen them before,
Nor indeed had they seen me,
Till I chanced to stand by our back door,
And they came to the poplar tree.

In course of time they built their nest
And reared a happy brood,
And every morn they piped their best
As they flew away to the wood.

Thus wore the summer hours away
To the bluebirds and to me,

And every hour was a summer's day,
So pleasantly lived we.

They were a world within themselves,
And I a world in me,
Up in the tree — the little elves —
With their callow family.

One morn the wind blowed cold and strong,
And the leaves went whirling away;
The birds prepared for their journey long
That raw and gusty day.

Boreas came blust'ring down from the north,
And ruffled their azure smocks,
So they launched them forth, though somewhat loth,
By way of the old Cliff rocks.

Meanwhile the earth jogged steadily on
In her mantle of purest white,
And anon another spring was born
When winter was vanished quite.

And I wandered forth o'er the steamy earth,
And gazed at the mellow sky,
But never before from the hour of my birth
Had I wandered so thoughtfully.

For never before was the earth so still,
And never so mild was the sky,
The river, the fields, the woods, and the hill
Seemed to heave an audible sigh.

I felt that the heavens were all around,
And the earth was all below,
As when in the ears there rushes a sound
Which thrills you from top to toe.

I dreamed that I was a waking thought,
A something I hardly knew,
Not a solid piece, nor an empty nought,
But a drop of morning dew.

'T was the world and I at a game of bo-peep,
As a man would dodge his shadow,
An idea becalmed in eternity's deep,
'Tween Lima and Segraddo.

Anon a faintly warbled note
From out the azure deep
Into my ears did gently float
As is the approach of sleep.

It thrilled but startled not my soul;
Across my mind strange mem'ries gleamed,
As often distant scenes unroll
When we have lately dreamed.

The bluebird had come from the distant South
To his box in the poplar tree,
And he opened wide his slender mouth
On purpose to sing to me.

JOURNEY TO MAINE

May 3–4. Boston to Portland.

What, indeed, is this earth to us of New England

but a field for Yankee speculation? The Nantucket whaler goes a-fishing round it, and so knows it, — what it is, how long, how broad, and that no tortoise sustains it. He who has visited the confines of his real estate, looking out on all sides into space, will feel a new inducement to *be* the lord of creation.

We must all pay a small tribute to Neptune; the chief engineer must once have been seasick.

Midnight — head over the boat's side — between sleeping and waking — with glimpses of one or more lights in the vicinity of Cape Ann. Bright moonlight — the effect heightened by seasickness. Beyond that light yonder have my lines hitherto been cast, but now I know that there lies not the whole world, for I can say it is there and not here.

May 4. Portland. There is a proper and only right way to enter a city, as well as to make advances to a strange person; neither will allow of the least forwardness nor bustle. A sensitive person can hardly elbow his way boldly, laughing and talking, into a strange town, without experiencing some twinges of conscience, as when he has treated a stranger with too much familiarity.

May 5. Portland to Bath *via* Brunswick; Bath to Brunswick.

Each one's world is but a clearing in the forest, so much open and inclosed ground. When the mail coach rumbles into one of these, the villagers gaze after you with a compassionate look, as much as to say: "Where have you been all this time, that you make your début in the world at this late hour? Nevertheless, here we

are; come and study us, that you may learn men and manners."

May 6. Brunswick to Augusta *via* Gardiner and Hallowell.

May 7. We occasionally meet an individual of a character and disposition so entirely the reverse of our own that we wonder if he can indeed be another man like ourselves. We doubt if we ever could draw any nearer to him, and understand him. Such was the old English gentleman whom I met with to-day in H. Though I peered in at his eyes I could not discern myself reflected therein. The chief wonder was how we could ever arrive at so fair-seeming an intercourse upon so small ground of sympathy. He walked and fluttered like a strange bird at my side, prying into and making a handle of the least circumstance. The bustle and rapidity of our communication were astonishing; we skated in our conversation. All at once he would stop short in the path, and, in an abstracted air, query whether the steamboat had reached Bath or Portland, addressing me from time to time as his familiar genius, who could understand what was passing in his mind without the necessity of uninterrupted oral communication.

May 8. Augusta to Bangor *via* China.

May 10. Bangor to Oldtown.

The railroad from Bangor to Oldtown is civilization shooting off in a tangent into the forest. I had much conversation with an old Indian at the latter place, who sat dreaming upon a scow at the waterside and striking his deer-skin moccasins against the planks, while his

arms hung listlessly by his side. He was the most communicative man I had met. Talked of hunting and fishing, old times and new times. Pointing up the Penobscot, he observed, "Two or three mile up the river one beautiful country!" and then, as if he would come as far to meet me as I had gone to meet him, he exclaimed, "Ugh! one very hard time!" But he had mistaken his man.

May 11. Bangor to Belfast *via* Saturday Cove.

May 12. Belfast.

May 13. To Castine by sailboat "Cinderilla [*sic*]."

May 14. Castine to Belfast by packet, Captain Skinner. Found the Poems of Burns and an odd volume of the "Spectator" in the cabin.

May 15. Belfast to Bath *via* Thomaston.

May 16. To Portland.

May 17. To Boston and Concord.

May 21. MAY MORNING

The school-boy loitered on his way to school,
Scorning to live so rare a day by rule.
So mild the air a pleasure 't was to breathe,
For what seems heaven above was earth beneath.

Soured neighbors chatted by the garden pale,
Nor quarrelled who should drive the needed nail;
The most unsocial made new friends that day,
As when the sun shines husbandmen make hay.

How long I slept I know not, but at last
I felt my consciousness returning fast,

For Zephyr rustled past with leafy tread,
And heedlessly with one heel grazed my head.

My eyelids opened on a field of blue,
For close above a nodding violet grew;
A part of heaven it seemed, which one could scent,
Its blue commingling with the firmament.

June 3. WALDEN

True, our converse a stranger is to speech;
Only the practiced ear can catch the surging words
That break and die upon thy pebbled lips.
Thy flow of thought is noiseless as the lapse of thy own waters,
Wafted as is the morning mist up from thy surface,
So that the passive Soul doth breathe it in,
And is infected with the truth thou wouldst express.

E'en the remotest stars have come in troops
And stoopèd low to catch the benediction
Of thy countenance. Oft as the day came round,
Impartial has the sun exhibited himself
Before thy narrow skylight; nor has the moon
For cycles failed to roll this way
As oft as elsewhither, and tell thee of the night.
No cloud so rare but hitherward it stalked,
And in thy face looked doubly beautiful.
O! tell me what the winds have writ for the last thousand years
On the blue vault that spans thy flood,
Or sun transferred and delicately reprinted

For thy own private reading. Somewhat
Within these latter days I've read,
But surely there was much that would have thrilled the
Soul,
Which human eye saw not.
I would give much to read that first bright page,
Wet from a virgin press, when Eurus, Boreas,
And the host of airy quill-drivers
First dipped their pens in mist.

June 14.

Truth, Goodness, Beauty, — those celestial thrins,[1]
Continually are born; e'en now the Universe,
With thousand throats, and eke with greener smiles,
Its joy confesses at their recent birth.

Strange that so many fickle gods, as fickle as the weather,
Throughout Dame Nature's provinces should always
pull together.

June 16.

In the busy streets, domains of trade,
Man is a surly porter, or a vain and hectoring bully,
Who can claim no nearer kindredship with me
Than brotherhood by law.

July 8. CLIFFS

The loudest sound that burdens here the breeze
Is the wood's whisper; 't is, when we choose to list,
Audible sound, and when we list not,

[1] [The word seems to be a new one, but its meaning is clear.]

It is calm profound. Tongues were provided
But to vex the ear with superficial thoughts.
When deeper thoughts upswell, the jarring discord
Of harsh speech is hushed, and senses seem
As little as may be to share the ecstasy.

HEROISM

July 13. What a hero one can be without moving a finger! The world is not a field worthy of us, nor can we be satisfied with the plains of Troy. A glorious strife seems waging within us, yet so noiselessly that we but just catch the sound of the clarion ringing of victory, borne to us on the breeze. There are in each the seeds of a heroic ardor, which need only to be stirred in with the *soil where they lie*, by an inspired voice or pen, to bear fruit of a divine flavor.[1]

SUSPICION

July 15. What though friends misinterpret your conduct, if it is right in sight of God and Nature. The wrong, if there be any, pertains only to the wrongdoer, nor is the integrity of your relations to the universe affected, but you may gather encouragement from their mistrust. If the friend withhold his favor, yet does greater float gratuitous on the zephyr.

TRUTH

Aug. 4. Whatever of past or present wisdom has published itself to the world, is palpable falsehood till it come and utter itself by my side.

[1] [*Week*, p. 129; Riv. 161.]

SPHERE MUSIC

Aug. 5. Some sounds seem to reverberate along the plain, and then settle to earth again like dust; such are Noise, Discord, Jargon. But such only as spring heavenward, and I may catch from steeples and hilltops in their upward course, which are the more refined parts of the former, are the true sphere music, — pure, unmixed music, — in which no wail mingles.

DIVINE SERVICE IN THE ACADEMY HALL

In dark places and dungeons these words might perhaps strike root and grow, but utter them in the daylight and their dusky hues are apparent. From this window I can compare the written with the preached word: within is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth; without, grain fields and grasshoppers, which give those the lie direct.

THE TIME OF THE UNIVERSE

Aug. 10. Nor can all the vanities that so vex the world alter one whit the measure that night has chosen, but ever it must be short particular metre. The human soul is a silent harp in God's quire, whose strings need only to be swept by the divine breath to chime in with the harmonies of creation. Every pulse-beat is in exact time with the cricket's chant, and the tickings of the death-watch in the wall. Alternate with these if you can.[1]

CONSCIOUSNESS

Aug. 13. If with closed ears and eyes I consult con-

[1] [*Excursions*, p. 108; Riv. 133.]

sciousness for a moment, immediately are all walls and barriers dissipated, earth rolls from under me, and I float, by the impetus derived from the earth and the system, a subjective, heavily laden thought, in the midst of an unknown and infinite sea, or else heave and swell like a vast ocean of thought, without rock or headland, where are all riddles solved, all straight lines making there their two ends to meet, eternity and space gambolling familiarly through my depths. I am from the beginning, knowing no end, no aim. No sun illumines me, for I dissolve all lesser lights in my own intenser and steadier light. I am a restful kernel in the magazine of the universe.

RESOURCE

Men are constantly dinging in my ears their fair theories and plausible solutions of the universe, but ever there is no help, and I return again to my shoreless, islandless ocean, and fathom unceasingly for a bottom that will hold an anchor, that it may not drag.

SABBATH BELL

Aug. 19. The sound of the sabbath bell, whose farthest waves are at this instant breaking on these cliffs, does not awaken pleasing associations alone. Its muse is wonderfully condescending and philanthropic. One involuntarily leans on his staff to humor the unusually meditative mood. It is as the sound of many catechisms and religious books twanging a canting peal round the world, and seems to issue from some Egyptian temple, and echo along the shore of the Nile, right opposite to

Pharaoh's palace and Moses in the bulrushes, startling a multitude of storks and alligators basking in the sun. Not so these larks and pewees of Musketaquid. One is sick at heart of this pagoda worship. It is like the beating of gongs in a Hindoo subterranean temple.[1]

HOLY WAR

Aug. 21. Passion and appetite are always an unholy land in which one may wage most holy war. Let him steadfastly follow the banner of his faith till it is planted on the enemy's citadel. Nor shall he lack fields to display his valor in, nor straits worthy of him. For when he has blown his blast, and smote those within reach, invisible enemies will not cease to torment him, who yet may be starved out in the garrisons where they lie.

SCRIPTURE

Aug. 22. How thrilling a noble sentiment in the oldest books, — in Homer, the Zendavesta, or Confucius! It is a strain of music wafted down to us on the breeze of time, through the aisles of innumerable ages. By its very nobleness it is made near and audible to us.

EVENING SOUNDS

Aug. 26. How strangely sounds of revelry strike the ear from over cultivated fields by the woodside, while the sun is declining in the west. It is a world we had not known before. We listen and are capable of no mean act or thought. We tread on Olympus and participate in the councils of the gods.

[1] [*Week*, p. 78; Riv. 97.]

HOMER

It does one's heart good if Homer but say the sun sets, — or, "As when beautiful stars accompany the bright moon through the serene heavens; and the woody hills and cliffs are discerned through the mild light, and each star is visible, and the shepherd rejoices in his heart." [1]

THE LOSS OF A TOOTH

Aug. 27. Verily I am the creature of circumstances. Here I have swallowed an indispensable tooth, and so am no whole man, but a lame and halting piece of manhood. I am conscious of no gap in my soul, but it would seem that, now the entrance to the oracle has been enlarged, the more rare and commonplace the responses that issue from it. I have felt cheap, and hardly dared hold up my head among men, ever since this accident happened. Nothing can I do as well and freely as before; nothing do I undertake but I am hindered and balked by this circumstance. What a great matter a little spark kindleth! I believe if I were called at this moment to rush into the thickest of the fight, I should halt for lack of so insignificant a piece of armor as a tooth. Virtue and Truth go undefended, and Falsehood and Affectation are thrown in my teeth, — though I am toothless. One does not need that the earth quake for the sake of excitement, when so slight a crack proves such an impassable moat. But let the lame man shake his leg, and match himself with the fleetest in the race. So shall he do what is in him to do. But let him who has lost a tooth open his mouth wide and gabble, lisp, and sputter never so resolutely.

[1] [*Week*, pp. 94, 95; Riv. 117, 119.]

DEFORMITY

Aug. 29. Here at the top of Nawshawtuct, this mild August afternoon, I can discern no deformed thing. The prophane hay-makers in yonder meadow are yet the hay-makers of poetry, — forsooth Faustus and Amyntas. Yonder schoolhouse of brick, than which, near at hand, nothing can be more mote-like to my eye, serves even to heighten the picturesqueness of the scene. Barns and outbuildings, which in the nearness mar by their presence the loveliness of nature, are not only endurable, but, observed where they lie by some waving field of grain or patch of woodland, prove a very cynosure to the pensive eye. Let man after infinite hammering and din of crows uprear a deformity in the plain, yet will Nature have her revenge on the hilltop. Retire a stone's throw and she will have changed his base metal into gold.

CRICKETS

The crackling flight of grasshoppers is a luxury; and pleasant is it when summer has once more followed in the steps of winter to hear scald cricket piping a Nibelungenlied in the grass. It is the most infinite of singers. Wiselier had the Greeks chosen a golden cricket, and let the grasshopper eat grass. One opens both his ears to the invisible, incessant quire, and doubts if it be not earth herself chanting for all time.

GENII

In the vulgar daylight of our self-conceit, good genii are still overlooking and conducting us; as the stars look down on us by day as by night — and we observe them not.

SPHERE MUSIC

Sept. 2. The cocks chant a strain of which we never tire. Some there are who find pleasure in the melody of birds and chirping of crickets, — aye, even the peeping of frogs. Such faint sounds as these are for the most part heard above the weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth which so unhallow the Sabbath among us. The moan the earth makes is after all a very faint sound, infinitely inferior in volume to its creakings of joy and gleeful murmurs; so that we may expect the next balloonist will rise above the utmost range of discordant sounds into the region of pure melody. Never so loud was the wail but it seemed to taper off into a piercing melody and note of joy, which lingered not amid the clods of the valley.

CREEDS

Sept. 3. The only faith that men recognize is a creed. But the true creed which we unconsciously live by, and which rather adopts us than we it, is quite different from the written or preached one. Men anxiously hold fast to their creed, as to a straw, thinking this does them good service because their sheet anchor does not drag.[1]

RIVERS

Sept. 5. For the first time it occurred to me this afternoon what a piece of wonder a river is, — a huge volume of matter ceaselessly rolling through the fields and meadows of this substantial earth, making haste from the high places, by stable dwellings of men and Egyptian Pyramids, to its restless reservoir. One would think

[1] [*Week*, p. 79; Riv. 98, 99. *The Service*, p. 4.]

that, by a very natural impulse, the dwellers upon the headwaters of the Mississippi and Amazon would follow in the trail of their waters to see the end of the matter.[1]

HOMER

Sept. 7. When Homer's messengers repair to the tent of Achilles, we do not have to wonder how they get there, but step by step accompany them along the shore of the resounding sea.[2]

FLOW OF SPIRITS IN YOUTH

Sept. 15. How unaccountable the flow of spirits in youth. You may throw sticks and dirt into the current, and it will only rise the higher. Dam it up you may, but dry it up you may not, for you cannot reach its source. If you stop up this avenue or that, anon it will come gurgling out where you least expected and wash away all fixtures. Youth grasps at happiness as an inalienable right. The tear does no sooner gush than glisten. Who shall say when the tear that sprung of sorrow first sparkled with joy?

ALMA NATURA

Sept. 20. It is a luxury to muse by a wall-side in the sunshine of a September afternoon, — to cuddle down under a gray stone, and hearken to the siren song of the cricket. Day and night seem henceforth but accidents, and the time is always a still eventide, and as the close of a happy day. Parched fields and mulleins gilded with the slanting rays are my diet. I know of no word so fit to express this disposition of Nature as Alma Natura.

[1] [*Week*, pp. 9-11; Riv. 11, 13.] [2] [*Week*, p. 96; Riv. 120.]

COMPENSATION

Sept. 23. If we will be quiet and ready enough, we shall find compensation in every disappointment. If a shower drives us for shelter to the maple grove or the trailing branches of the pine, yet in their recesses with microscopic eye we discover some new wonder in the bark, or the leaves, or the fungi at our feet. We are interested by some new resource of insect economy, or the chickadee is more than usually familiar. We can study Nature's nooks and corners then.[1]

Oct. 16. MY BOOTS

Anon with gaping fearlessness they quaff
The dewy nectar with a natural thirst,
Or wet their leathern lungs where cranberries lurk,
With sweeter wine than Chian, Lesbian, or Falernian
far.
Theirs was the inward lustre that bespeaks
An open sole — unknowing to exclude
The cheerful day — a worthier glory far
Than that which gilds the outmost rind with darkness
visible —
Virtues that fast abide through lapse of years,
Rather rubbed in than off.

HOMER

Oct. 21. Hector hurrying from rank to rank is likened to the moon wading in majesty from cloud to cloud. We are reminded of the hour of the day by the fact that the woodcutter spreads now his morning meal in the

[1] [*Week*, p. 319; Riv. 395.]

recesses of the mountains, having already laid his axe at the root of many lofty trees.[1]

Oct. 23. Nestor's simple repast after the rescue of Machaon is a fit subject for poetry. The woodcutter may sit down to his cold victuals, the hero to soldier's fare, and the wild Arab to his dried dates and figs, without offense; but not so a modern gentleman to his dinner.

Oct. 24. It matters not whether these strains originate there in the grass or float thitherward like atoms of light from the minstrel days of Greece.

"The snowflakes fall thick and fast on a winter's day. The winds are lulled, and the snow falls incessant, covering the tops of the mountains, and the hills, and the plains where the lotus tree grows, and the cultivated fields. And they are falling by the inlets and shores of the foaming sea, but are silently dissolved by the waves."[2]

SPECULATION

Dec. 7. We may believe it, but never do we live a quiet, free life, such as Adam's, but are enveloped in an invisible network of speculations. Our progress is only from one such speculation to another, and only at rare intervals do we perceive that it is no progress. Could we for a moment drop this by-play, and simply wonder, without reference or inference!

[1] [See *Week*, p. 95 (Riv. 118), where the passages referred to appear in translation.]

[2] [*Excursions*, pp. 181, 182; Riv. 221, 222.]

BYRON

Dec. 8. Nothing in nature is sneaking or chapfallen, as somewhat maltreated and slighted, but each is satisfied with its being, and so is as lavender and balm. If skunk-cabbage is offensive to the nostrils of men, still has it not drooped in consequence, but trustfully unfolded its leaf of two hands' breadth. What was it to Lord Byron whether England owned or disowned him, whether he smelled sour and was skunk-cabbage to the English nostril or violet-like, the pride of the land and ornament of every lady's boudoir? Let not the oyster grieve that he has lost the race; he has gained as an oyster.

Dec. 15. FAIR HAVEN [1]

When winter fringes every bough
With his fantastic wreath,
And puts the seal of silence now
Upon the leaves beneath;

When every stream in its penthouse
Goes gurgling on its way,
And in his gallery the mouse
Nibbleth the meadow hay;

Methinks the summer still is nigh,
And lurketh there below,
As that same meadow mouse doth lie
Snug underneath the snow.

[1] [All but the last stanza, somewhat revised and without title, appears in *Excursions*, pp. 176, 177; Riv. 215, 216.]

And if perchance the chickadee
Lisp a faint note anon,
The snow is summer's canopy,
Which she herself put on.

Rare blossoms deck the cheerful trees,
And dazzling fruits depend,
The north wind sighs a summer breeze,
The nipping frosts to fend,

Bringing glad tidings unto me,
While that I stand all ear,
Of a serene eternity,
That need not winter fear.

Out on the silent pond straightway
The restless ice doth crack,
And pond sprites merry gambols play
Amid the deaf'ning rack.

Eager I press me to the vale
As I had heard brave news,
How nature held high festival,
Which it were hard to lose.

I crack me with my neighbor ice,
And sympathizing quake,
As each new rent darts in a trice
Across the gladsome lake.

One with the cricket in the ground,
And fuel on the hearth,

Resounds the rare domestic sound
Along the forest path.

Fair Haven is my huge tea-urn
That seethes and sings to me,
And eke the crackling fagots burn, —
A homebred minstrelsy.

SOME SCRAPS FROM AN ESSAY ON "SOUND AND SILENCE" WRITTEN IN THE LATTER HALF OF THIS MONTH, — DECEMBER, 1838 [1]

As the truest society approaches always nearer to solitude, so the most excellent speech finally falls into silence. We go about to find Solitude and Silence, as though they dwelt only in distant glens and the depths of the forest, venturing out from these fastnesses at midnight. Silence *was*, say we, before ever the world was, as if creation had displaced her, and were not her visible framework and foil. It is only favorite dells that she deigns to frequent, and we dream not that she is then imported into them when we wend thither, as Selden's butcher busied himself with looking after his knife, when he had it in his mouth. For where man is, there is Silence.

Silence is the communing of a conscious soul with itself. If the soul attend for a moment to its own infinity, then and there is silence. She is audible to all men, at all times, in all places, and if we will we may always hearken to her admonitions.

[1] [Cf. *Week*, pp. 417–420; Riv. 515–518.]

Silence is ever less strange than noise, lurking amid the boughs of the hemlock or pine just in proportion as we find ourselves there. The nuthatch, tapping the upright trunks by our side, is only a partial spokesman for the solemn stillness.

She is always at hand with her wisdom, by roadsides and street corners; lurking in belfries, the cannon's mouth, and the wake of the earthquake; gathering up and fondling their puny din in her ample bosom.

Those divine sounds which are uttered to our inward ear — which are breathed in with the zephyr or reflected from the lake — come to us noiselessly, bathing the temples of the soul, as we stand motionless amid the rocks.

The halloo is the creature of walls and masonwork; the whisper is fittest in the depths of the wood, or by the shore of the lake; but silence is best adapted to the acoustics of space.

All sounds are her servants and purveyors, proclaiming not only that their mistress is, but is a rare mistress, and earnestly to be sought after. Behind the most distinct and significant hovers always a more significant silence which floats it. The thunder is only our signal gun, that we may know what communion awaits us. Not its dull sound, but the infinite expansion of our being which ensues, we praise and unanimously name sublime.

All sound is nearly akin to Silence; it is a bubble on her surface which straightway bursts, an emblem of the strength and prolificness of the undercurrent. It is a faint utterance of Silence, and then only agreeable to our auditory nerves when it contrasts itself with the former. In proportion as it does this, and is a heightener and intensifier of the Silence, it is harmony and purest melody.

Every melodious sound is the ally of Silence, — a help and not a hindrance to abstraction.

Certain sounds more than others have found favor with the poets only as foils to silence.

ANACREON'S ODE TO THE CICADA [1]

We pronounce thee happy, cicada,
For on the tops of the trees,
Sipping a little dew,
Like any king thou singest,
For thine are they all,
Whatever thou seest in the fields,
And whatever the woods bear.
Thou art the friend of the husbandmen,
In no respect injuring any one;
And thou art honored among men,
Sweet prophet of summer.
The Muses love thee,
And Phœbus himself loves thee,
And has given thee a shrill song;

[1] [*Excursions*, p. 108; Riv. 133. "Drinking" for "Sipping" in l. 3 is the only change.]

Age does not wrack thee,
Thou skillful, earth-born, song-loving,
Unsuffering, bloodless one;
Almost thou art like the gods.

Silence is the universal refuge, the sequel of all dry discourses and all foolish acts, as balm to our every chagrin, as welcome after satiety as [after] disappointment; that background which the painter may not daub, be he master or bungler, and which, however awkward a figure he may have made in the foreground, remains ever our inviolable asylum.

With what equanimity does the silent consider how his world goes, settles the awards of virtue and justice, is slandered and buffeted never so much and views it all as a phenomenon. He is one with Truth, Goodness, Beauty. No indignity can assail him, no personality disturb him.

The orator puts off his individuality, and is then most eloquent when most silent. He listens while he speaks, and is a hearer along with his audience.

Who has not hearkened to her infinite din? She is Truth's speaking trumpet, which every man carries slung over his shoulder, and when he will may apply to his ear. She is the sole oracle, the true Delphi and Dodona, which kings and courtiers would do well to consult, nor will they be balked by an ambiguous answer. Through her have all revelations been made. Just as

far as men have consulted her oracle, they have obtained a clear insight, and their age been marked for an enlightened one. But as often as they have gone gadding abroad to a strange Delphi and her mad priestess, they have been benighted, and their age Dark or Leaden. — These are garrulous and noisy eras, which no longer yield any sound; but the Grecian, or *silent* and melodious, Era is ever sounding on the ears of men.

A good book is the plectrum with which our silent lyres are struck. In all epics, when, after breathless attention, we come to the significant words "He said," then especially our inmost man is addressed. We not unfrequently refer the interest which belongs to our own unwritten sequel to the written and comparatively lifeless page. Of all valuable books this same sequel makes an indispensable part. It is the author's aim to say once and emphatically, "He said." This is the most the bookmaker can attain to. If he make his volume a foil whereon the waves of silence may break, it is well. It is not so much the sighing of the blast as that pause, as Gray expresses it, "when the gust is recollecting itself," that thrills us, and is infinitely grander than the importunate howlings of the storm.

At evening Silence sends many emissaries to me, some navigating the subsiding waves which the village murmur has agitated.

It were vain for me to interpret the Silence. She cannot be done into English. For six thousand years have

men translated her, with what fidelity belonged to each; still is she little better than a sealed book. A man may run on confidently for a time, thinking he has her under his thumb, and shall one day exhaust her, but he too must at last be silent, and men remark only how brave a beginning he made; for, when he at length dives into her, so vast is the disproportion of the told to the untold that the former will seem but the bubble on the surface where he disappeared.

Nevertheless will we go on, like those Chinese cliff swallows, feathering our nests with the froth, so they may one day be bread of life to such as dwell by the seashore.

ANACREONTICS

Dec. 23. RETURN OF SPRING [1]

Behold, how, spring appearing,
The Graces send forth roses;
Behold, how the wave of the sea
Is made smooth by the calm;
Behold, how the duck dives;
Behold, how the crane travels;
And Titan shines constantly bright.
The shadows of the clouds are moving;
The works of man shine;
The earth puts forth fruits;
The fruit of the olive puts forth.
The cup of Bacchus is crowned.

[1] [*Excursions*, pp. 109, 110; Riv. 135.]

Along the leaves, along the branches,
The fruit, bending them down, flourishes.

CUPID WOUNDED [1]

Love once among roses
A sleeping bee
Did not see, but was stung;
And, being wounded in the finger
Of his hand, cried for pain.
Running as well as flying
To the beautiful Venus,
I am killed, mother, said he,
I am killed, and I die.
A little serpent has stung me,
Winged, which they call
A bee, — the husbandmen.
And she said, If the sting
Of a bee afflicts you,
How, think you, are they afflicted,
Love, whom you smite?

[*Dated only* 1838.] Sometimes I hear the veery's silver clarion, or the brazen note of the impatient jay, or in secluded woods the chickadee doles out her scanty notes, which sing the praise of heroes, and set forth the loveliness of virtue evermore. — *Phe-be.*[2]

[1] [*Week*, p. 244 ; Riv. 302. Lines 2 and 3 are altered.]
[2] [*Excursions*, p. 112 ; Riv. 138.]

III

1839

(ÆT. 21–22)

Jan. 11. THE THAW [1]

I saw the civil sun drying earth's tears,
Her tears of joy, that only faster flowed.

Fain would I stretch me by the highway-side,
To thaw and trickle with the melting snow,
That, mingled soul and body with the tide,
I too may through the pores of nature flow.

But I, alas, nor trickle can nor fume,
One jot to forward the great work of Time,
'T is mine to hearken while these ply the loom,
So shall my silence with their music chime.

THE DREAM VALLEY

Jan. 20. The prospect of our river valley from Tahatawan Cliff appeared to me again in my dreams.

Last night, as I lay gazing with shut eyes
Into the golden land of dreams,
I thought I gazed adown a quiet reach
Of land and water prospect,
Whose low beach

[1] [*Excursions, and Poems*, pp. 120 and 409; *Excursions*, Riv. 147.]

Was peopled with the now subsiding hum
Of happy industry, whose work is done.

And as I turned me on my pillow o'er,
I heard the lapse of waves upon the shore,
Distinct as it had been at broad noonday,
And I were wandering at Rockaway.

LOVE

We two that planets erst had been
Are now a double star,
And in the heavens may be seen,
Where that we fixèd are.

Yet, whirled with subtle power along,
Into new space we enter,
And evermore with spheral song
Revolve about one centre.

Feb. 3.

The deeds of king and meanest hedger
Stand side by side in heaven's ledger.

'T will soon appear if we but look
At evening into earth's day-book,
Which way the great account doth stand
Between the heavens and the land.

THE EVENING WIND

The eastern mail comes lumbering in,
With outmost waves of Europe's din;

The western sighs adown the slope,
Or 'mid the rustling leaves doth grope,
Laden with news from Californ',
Whate'er transpired hath since morn,
How wags the world by brier and brake,
From hence to Athabasca lake.[1]

POETIZING

Feb. 8. When the poetic frenzy seizes us, we run and scratch with our pen, delighting, like the cock, in the dust we make, but do not detect where the jewel lies, which perhaps we have in the meantime cast to a distance, or quite covered up again.[2]

Feb. 9. It takes a man to make a room silent.

Feb. 10. THE PEAL OF THE BELLS[3]

When the world grows old by the chimney-side,
Then forth to the youngling rocks I glide,
Where over the water, and over the land,
The bells are booming on either hand.

Now up they go ding, then down again dong,
And awhile they swing to the same old song,
And the metal goes round at a single bound,
A-lulling the fields with its measured sound,
Till the tired tongue falls with a lengthened boom
As solemn and loud as the crack of doom.

[1] [*Week*, p. 180; Riv. 224.]

[2] [*Week*, pp. 364, 365; Riv. 451, 452.]

[3] [This poem will be found in *Excursions, and Poems*, p. 417, under the title "Ding Dong," somewhat revised and without the last stanza.]

Then changed is their measure to tone upon tone,
And seldom it is that one sound comes alone,
For they ring out their peals in a mingled throng,
And the breezes waft the loud ding-dong along.

When the echo has reached me in this lone vale,
I am straightway a hero in coat of mail,
I tug at my belt and I march on my post,
And feel myself more than a match for a host.

I am on the alert for some wonderful Thing
Which somewhere's a-taking place;
'T is perchance the salute which our planet doth ring
When it meeteth another in space.

Feb. 25. THE SHRIKE

Hark! hark! from out the thickest fog
Warbles with might and main
The fearless shrike, as all agog
To find in fog his gain.

His steady sails he never furls
At any time o' year,
And, perchèd now on Winter's curls,
He whistles in his ear.[1]

THE POET

March 3. He must be something more than natural, — even supernatural. Nature will not speak through but along with him. His voice will not proceed from her

[1] [*Excursions*, p. 109; Riv. 134.]

midst, but, breathing on her, will make her the expression of his thought. He then poetizes when he takes a fact out of nature into spirit. He speaks without reference to time or place. His thought is one world, hers another. He is another Nature, — Nature's brother. Kindly offices do they perform for one another. Each publishes the other's truth.

MORNING

April 4. The atmosphere of morning gives a healthy hue to our prospects. Disease is a sluggard that overtakes, never encounters, us. We have the start each day, and may fairly distance him before the dew is off; but if we recline in the bowers of noon, he will come up with us after all. The morning dew breeds no cold. We enjoy a diurnal reprieve in the beginning of each day's creation. In the morning we do not believe in expediency; we will start afresh, and have no patching, no temporary fixtures. The afternoon man has an interest in the past; his eye is divided, and he sees indifferently well either way.

DRIFTING

Drifting in a sultry day on the sluggish waters of the pond, I almost cease to live and begin to be. A boatman stretched on the deck of his craft and dallying with the noon would be as apt an emblem of eternity for me as the serpent with his tail in his mouth. I am never so prone to lose my identity. I am dissolved in the haze.

DISAPPOINTMENT

April 7. *Sunday.* The tediousness and detail of execution never occur to the genius projecting; it always

antedates the completion of its work. It condescends to give time a few hours to do its bidding in.

RESOLVE

Most have sufficient contempt for what is mean to resolve that they will abstain from it, and a few virtue enough to abide by their resolution, but not often does one attain to such lofty contempt as to require no resolution to be made.

THE TEAMSTER

April 8. There goes a six-horse team, and a man by its side. He has rolled out of his cradle into a Tom-and-Jerry, and goes about his business while Nature goes about hers, without standing agape at his condition. As though sixty years were not enough for these things! What have death, and the cholera, and the immortal destiny of man, to do with the shipping interests? There is an unexplained bravery in this. What with bare astonishment one would think that man had his hands full for so short a term. But this is no drawback on the lace-working and cap-making interests. Some attain to such a degree of sang-froid and nonchalance as to be weavers of toilet cushions and manufacturers of pinheads, without once flinching or the slightest affection of the nerves, for the period of a natural life.[1]

FAT PINE FOR SPEARING

April 9. Fat roots of pine lying in rich veins as of gold or silver, even in old pastures where you would least expect it, make you realize that you live in the

[1] [*Walden*, p. 8; Riv. 14, 15.]

youth of the world, and you begin to know the wealth of the planet. Human nature is still in its prime, then. Bring axe, pickaxe, and shovel, and tap the earth here where there is most sap. The marrowy store gleams like some vigorous sinew, and you feel a new suppleness in your own limbs. These are the traits that conciliate man's moroseness, and make him civil to his fellows; every such pine root is a pledge of suavity. If he can discover absolute barrenness in any direction there will be some excuse for peevishness.

SOCIETY

April 14. There is a *terra firma* in society as well as in geography, some whose ports you may make by dead reckoning in all weather. All the rest are but floating and fabulous Atlantides which sometimes skirt the western horizon of our intercourse. They impose only on seasick mariners who have put into some Canary Island on the frontiers of society.

CIRCUMSTANCES

April 24. Why should we concern ourselves with what has happened to us, and the unaccountable fickleness of events, and not rather [with] how we have happened to the universe, and it has demeaned itself in consequence? Let us record in each case the judgment we have awarded to circumstances.

ACQUAINTANCE

Cheap persons will stand upon ceremony, because there is no other ground; but to the great of the

earth we need no introduction, nor do they need any to us.

THE KINGDOMS OF THE EARTH

April 25. If we see the reality in things, of what moment is the superficial and apparent? Take the earth and all the interests it has known, — what are they beside one deep surmise that pierces and scatters them? The independent beggar disposes of all with one hearty, significant curse by the roadside. 'T is true they are not worth a "tinker's damn."

PICTURE

April 30. Of some illuminated pictures which I saw last evening, one representing the plain of Babylon, with only a heap of brick-dust in the centre, and an uninterrupted horizon bounding the desert, struck me most. I would see painted a boundless expanse of desert, prairie, or sea, without other object than the horizon. The heavens and the earth, — the first and last painting, — where is the artist who shall undertake it?

May 11. The farmer keeps pace with his crops and the revolutions of the seasons, but the merchant with the fluctuations of trade. Observe how differently they walk in the streets.

VICE AND VIRTUE

May 16. Virtue is the very heart and lungs of vice: it cannot stand up but it lean on virtue.

Who has not admired the twelve labors? And yet nobody thinks if Hercules had sufficient motive for

racking his bones to that degree. Men are not so much virtuous as patrons of virtue, and every one knows that it is easier to deal with the real possessor of a thing than the temporary guardian of it.

THE FORM OF STRENGTH

May 17. We say justly that the weak person is flat; for, like all flat substances, he does not stand in the direction of his strength, that is on his edge, but affords a convenient surface to put upon. He slides all the way through life. Most things are strong in one direction, — a straw longitudinally, a board in the direction of its edge, a knee transversely to its grain, — but the brave man is a perfect sphere, which cannot fall on its flat side, and is equally strong every way. The coward is wretchedly spheroidal at best, too much educated or drawn out on one side commonly and depressed on the other; or he may be likened to a hollow sphere, whose disposition of matter is best when the greatest bulk is intended.[1]

SELF-CULTURE

May 21. Who knows how incessant a surveillance a strong man may maintain over himself, — how far subject passion and appetite to reason, and lead the life his imagination paints? Well has the poet said, —

> "By manly mind
> Not e'en in sleep is will resigned."

By a strong effort may he not command even his brute body in unconscious moments?

[1] [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, p. 278; *Misc.*, Riv. 36, 37. *The Service*, pp. 5, 6.]

MY ATTIC

June 4. I sit here this fourth of June, looking out on men and nature from this that I call my perspective window, through which all things are seen in their true relations. This is my upper empire, bounded by four walls, viz., three of boards yellow-washed, facing the north, west, and south, respectively, and the fourth of plaster, likewise yellow-washed, fronting the sunrise, — to say nothing of the purlieus and outlying provinces, unexplored as yet but by rats.

The words of some men are thrown forcibly against you and adhere like burs.

RENCOUNTER

June 22. *Saturday.* I have within the last few days come into contact with a pure, uncompromising spirit, that is somewhere wandering in the atmosphere, but settles not positively anywhere. Some persons carry about them the air and conviction of virtue, though they themselves are unconscious of it, and are even backward to appreciate it in others. Such it is impossible not to love; still is their loveliness, as it were, independent of them, so that you seem not to lose it when they are absent, for when they are near it is like an invisible presence which attends you.

That virtue we appreciate is as much ours as another's. We see so much only as we possess.

June 24. SYMPATHY [1]

Lately, alas, I knew a gentle boy,
Whose features all were cast in Virtue's mould,

[1] [*Week*, pp. 276, 277; Riv. 343, 344.]

As one she had designed for Beauty's toy,
But after manned him for her own stronghold.

On every side he open was as day,
That you might see no lack of strength within,
For walls and ports do only serve alway
For a pretense to feebleness and sin.

Say not that Cæsar was victorious,
With toil and strife who stormed the House of Fame;
In other sense this youth was glorious,
Himself a kingdom wheresoe'er he came.

No strength went out to get him victory,
When all was income of its own accord;
For where he went none other was to see,
But all were parcel of their noble lord.

He forayed like the subtle haze of summer,
That stilly shows fresh landscapes to our eyes,
And revolutions works without a murmur,
Or rustling of a leaf beneath the skies.

So was I taken unawares by this,
I quite forgot my homage to confess;
Yet now am forced to know, though hard it is,
I might have loved him, had I loved him less.

Each moment, as we nearer drew to each,
A stern respect withheld us farther yet,
So that we seemed beyond each other's reach,
And less acquainted than when first we met.

We two were one while we did sympathize,
So could we not the simplest bargain drive;
And what avails it now that we are wise,
If absence doth this doubleness contrive?

Eternity may not the chance repeat,
But I must tread my single way alone,
In sad remembrance that we once did meet,
And know that bliss irrevocably gone.

The spheres henceforth my elegy shall sing,
For elegy has other subject none;
Each strain of music in my ears shall ring
Knell of departure from that other one.

Make haste and celebrate my tragedy;
With fitting strain resound, ye woods and fields;
Sorrow is dearer in such case to me
Than all the joys other occasion yields.

Is't then too late the damage to repair?
Distance, forsooth, from my weak grasp hath reft
The empty husk, and clutched the useless tare,
But in my hands the wheat and kernel left.

If I but love that virtue which he is,
Though it be scented in the morning air,
Still shall we be truest acquaintances,
Nor mortals know a sympathy more rare.

July 4. THE "BOOK OF GEMS"

With cunning plates the polished leaves were decked,
Each one a window to the poet's world,

So rich a prospect that you might suspect
In that small space all paradise unfurled.

It was a right delightful road to go,
Marching through pastures of such fair herbage,
O'er hill and dale it led, and to and fro,
From bard to bard, making an easy stage;

Where ever and anon I slaked my thirst
Like a tired traveller at some poet's well,
Which from the teeming ground did bubbling burst,
And tinkling thence adown the page it fell.
Still through the leaves its music you might hear,
Till other springs fell faintly on the ear.

ANNURSNACK

July 11. At length we leave the river and take to the road which leads to the hilltop, if by any means we may spy out what manner of earth we inhabit. East, west, north, and south, it is farm and parish, this world of ours. One may see how at convenient, eternal intervals men have settled themselves, without thought for the universe. How little matters it all they have built and delved there in the valley! It is after all but a feature in the landscape. Still the vast impulse of nature breathes over all. The eternal winds sweep across the interval *to-day*, bringing mist and haze to shut out their works. Still the crow caws from Nawshawtuct to Annursnack, as no feeble tradesman nor smith may do. And in all swamps the hum of mosquitoes drowns this modern hum of industry.

EVERY MAN IS A ROMAN FORUM

All things are up and down, east and west, to *me*. In me is the forum out of which go the Appian and Sacred ways, and a thousand beside, to the ends of the world. If I forget my centralness, and say a bean winds with or against the *sun*, and not right or left, it will not be true south of the equator.

July 18. THE ASSABET

Up this pleasant stream let's row
For the livelong summer's day,
Sprinkling foam where'er we go
In wreaths as white as driven snow.
Ply the oars! away! away! [1]

Now we glide along the shore,
Chucking lilies as we go,
While the yellow-sanded floor
Doggedly resists the oar,
Like some turtle dull and slow.

Now we stem the middle tide,
Plowing through the deepest soil;
Ridges pile on either side,
While we through the furrow glide,
Reaping bubbles for our toil.

Dew before and drought behind,
Onward all doth seem to fly;
Naught contents the eager mind,
Only rapids now are kind,
Forward are the earth and sky.

[1] [*Week*, p. 188; Riv. 234.]

View from Annursnack Hill

View from Annursnack Hill

Sudden music strikes the ear,
  Leaking out from yonder bank,
Fit such voyagers to cheer.
Sure there must be Naiads here,
  Who have kindly played this prank.

There I know the cunning pack
  Where yon self-sufficient rill
All its telltale hath kept back,
Through the meadows held its clack,
  And now bubbleth its fill.

Silent flows the parent stream,
  And if rocks do lie below
Smothers with her waves the din,
As it were a youthful sin,
  Just as still and just as slow.

But this gleeful little rill,
  Purling round its storied pebble,
Tinkles to the selfsame tune
From December until June,
  Nor doth any drought enfeeble.

See the sun behind the willows,
  Rising through the golden haze,
How he gleams along the billows,
Their white crests the easy pillows
  Of his dew-besprinkled rays.

Forward press we to the dawning,
  For Aurora leads the way,

Sultry noon and twilight scorning;
In each dewdrop of the morning
Lies the promise of a day.

Rivers from the sun do flow,
Springing with the dewy morn;
Voyageurs 'gainst time do row,
Idle noon nor sunset know,
Ever even with the dawn.[1]

Since that first "Away! away!"
Many a lengthy league we've rowed,
Still the sparrow on the spray
Hastes to usher in the day
With her simple stanza'd ode.[2]

July 20. THE BREEZE'S INVITATION

Come let's roam the breezy pastures,
Where the freest zephyrs blow,
Batten on the oak tree's rustle,
And the pleasant insect bustle,
Dripping with the streamlet's flow.

What if I no wings do wear,
Thro' this solid-seeming air
I can skim like any swallow;
Whoso dareth let her follow,
And we'll be a jovial pair.

Like two careless swifts let's sail,
Zephyrus shall think for me;

[1] [*Week*, p. 188; Riv. 234.] [2] [*Week*, p. 200; Riv. 248.]

Over hill and over dale,
Riding on the easy gale,
We will scan the earth and sea.

Yonder see that willow tree
Winnowing the buxom air;
You a gnat and I a bee,
With our merry minstrelsy
We will make a concert there.

One green leaf shall be our screen,
Till the sun doth go to bed,
I the king and you the queen
Of that peaceful little green,
Without any subject's aid.

To our music Time will linger,
And earth open wide her ear,
Nor shall any need to tarry
To immortal verse to marry
Such sweet music as he'll hear.

July 24.

Nature doth have her dawn each day,
But mine are far between;
Content, I cry, for, sooth to say,
Mine brightest are, I ween.

For when my sun doth deign to rise,
Though it be her noontide,
Her fairest field in shadow lies,
Nor can my light abide.

Sometimes I bask me in her day,
Conversing with my mate;
But if we interchange one ray,
Forthwith her heats abate.

Through his discourse I climb and see,
As from some eastern hill,
A brighter morrow rise to me
Than lieth in her skill.

As 't were two summer days in one,
Two Sundays come together,
Our rays united make one sun,
With fairest summer weather.[1]

July 25. There is no remedy for love but to love more.

Aug. 31. Made seven miles, and moored our boat on the west side of a little rising ground which in the spring forms an island in the river, the sun going down on one hand, and our eminence contributing its shadow to the night on the other.[2] In the twilight so elastic is the air that the sky seems to tinkle [*sic*] over farmhouse and wood. Scrambling up the bank of our *terra incognita* we fall on huckleberries, which have slowly ripened here, husbanding the juices which the months have distilled, for our peculiar use this night.[3] If they had been rank poison, the entire simplicity and confidence with which we plucked them would have

[1] [*Week*, pp. 302, 303; Riv. 375, 376.] [2] [*Week*, p. 38; Riv. 47.]
[3] [*Week*, p. 38; Riv. 47.]

insured their wholesomeness. The devout attitude of the hour asked a blessing on that repast. It was fit for the setting sun to rest on.

From our tent here on the hillside, through that isosceles door, I see our lonely mast on the shore, it may be as an eternity fixture, to be seen in landscapes henceforth, or as the most temporary standstill of time, the boat just come to anchor, and the mast still rocking to find its balance.[1]

No human life is in night, — the woods, the boat, the shore, — yet is it lifelike.[2] The warm pulse of a young life beats steadily underneath all. This slight wind is where one artery approaches the surface and is skin deep.

While I write here, I hear the foxes trotting about me over the dead leaves, and now gently over the grass, as if not to disturb the dew which is falling. Why should we not cultivate neighborly relations with the foxes? As if to improve upon our seeming advances, comes one to greet us nosewise under our tent-curtain. Nor do we rudely repulse him. Is man powder and the fox flint and steel? Has not the time come when men and foxes shall lie down together?

Hist! there, the musquash by the boat is taking toll of potatoes and melons. Is not this the age of a community of goods? His presumption kindles in me

[1] [*Week*, p. 39; Riv. 48.] [2] [*Week*, p. 39; Riv. 48, 49.]

a brotherly feeling. Nevertheless. I get up to reconnoitre, and tread stealthily along the shore to make acquaintance with him. But on the riverside I can see only the stars reflected in the water, and now, by some ripple ruffling the disk of a star, I discover him.

In the silence of the night the sound of a distant alarm bell is borne to these woods. Even now men have fires and extinguish them, and, with distant horizon blazings and barking of dogs, enact the manifold drama of life.[1]

We begin to have an interest in sun, moon, and stars. What time riseth Orion? Which side the pole gropeth the bear? East, West, North, and South, — where are they? What clock shall tell the hours for us? — Billerica, midnight.

Sept. 1. *Sunday.* Under an oak on the bank of the canal in Chelmsford.

From Ball's Hill to Billerica meeting-house the river is a noble stream of water, flowing between gentle hills and occasional cliffs, and well wooded all the way. It can hardly be said to flow at all, but rests in the lap of the hills like a quiet lake. The boatmen call it a dead stream. For many long reaches you can see nothing to indicate that men inhabit its banks.[2] Nature seems to hold a sabbath herself to-day, — a still warm sun on river and wood, and not breeze enough to ruffle the water. Cattle stand up to their bellies in the river, and you think Rembrandt should be here.

[1] [*Week*, p. 39; Riv. 49.] [2] [*Week*, p. 43; Riv. 54.]

Camped under some oaks in Tyngsboro, on the east bank of the Merrimack, just below the ferry.[1]

Sept. 2. Camped in Merrimack, on the west bank, by a deep ravine.[2]

Sept. 3. In Bedford, on the west bank, opposite a large rock, above Coos Falls.[3]

Sept. 4. *Wednesday.* Hooksett, east bank, two or three miles below the village, opposite Mr. Mitchel's.[4]

Sept. 5. Walked to Concord [N. H.], 10 miles.[5]

Sept. 6. By stage to Plymouth, 40 miles, and on foot to Tilton's inn, Thornton. The scenery commences on Sanbornton Square, whence the White Mountains are first visible. In Campton it is decidedly mountainous.

Sept. 7. Walked from Thornton through Peeling[6] and Lincoln to Franconia. In Lincoln visited Stone Flume and Basin, and in Franconia the Notch, and saw the Old Man of the Mountain.

Sept. 8. Walked from Franconia to Thomas J. Crawford's.

Sept. 9. At Crawford's.

Sept. 10. Ascended the mountain and rode to Conway.

Sept. 11. Rode to Concord.

Sept. 12. Rode to Hooksett and rowed to Bedford, N. H., or rather to the northern part of Merrimack, near the ferry, by a large island, near which we camped.[7]

[1] [*Week*, p. 118 ; Riv. 147.]
[2] [*Week*, p. 179 ; Riv. 222.]
[3] [*Week*, p. 248 ; Riv. 307.]
[4] [*Week*, p. 309 ; Riv. 383.]
[5] [See *Week*, pp. 318–322 ; Riv. 394–399.]
[6] [The original name of Woodstock, N. H.]
[7] [See *Week*, pp. 335–353 ; Riv. 414–437.]

Sept. 13. Rowed and sailed to Concord, about 50 miles.[1]

THE WISE REST

Sept. 17. Nature never makes haste; her systems revolve at an even pace. The bud swells imperceptibly, without hurry or confusion, as though the short spring days were an eternity.[2] All her operations seem separately, for the time, the single object for which all things tarry. Why, then, should man hasten as if anything less than eternity were allotted for the least deed? Let him consume never so many æons, so that he go about the meanest task well, though it be but the paring of his nails.[3] If the setting sun seems to hurry him to improve the day while it lasts, the chant of the crickets fails not to reassure him, even-measured as of old, teaching him to take his own time henceforth forever. The wise man is restful, never restless or impatient. He each moment abides there where he is, as some walkers actually rest the whole body at each step, while others never relax the muscles of the leg till the accumulated fatigue obliges them to stop short.

As the wise is not anxious that time wait for him, neither does he wait for it.

Oct. 22. Nature will bear the closest inspection. She invites us to lay our eye level with her smallest leaf, and take an insect view of its plain.[4]

[1] [See *Week*, pp. 356–420; Riv. 442–518.]
[2] [*Week*, pp. 110, 111; Riv. 137.]
[3] [*Week*, p. 110; Riv. 137.]
[4] [*Excursions*, p. 107; Riv. 132.]

ÆSCHYLUS

Nov. 5. There was one man lived his own healthy Attic life in those days. The words that have come down to us evidence that their speaker was a seer in his day and generation. At this day they owe nothing to their dramatic form, nothing to stage machinery, and the fact that they were spoken under these or those circumstances. All display of art for the gratification of a factitious taste is silently passed by to come at the least particle of absolute and genuine thought they contain. The reader will be disappointed, however, who looks for traits of a rare wisdom or eloquence, and will have to solace himself, for the most part, with the poet's humanity and what it was in him to say. He will discover that, like every genius, he was a solitary liver and worker in his day.

We are accustomed to say that the common sense of this age belonged to the seer of the last, — as if time gave him any vantage ground. But not so: I see not but Genius must ever take an equal start, and all the generations of men are virtually at a standstill for it to come and consider of them. Common sense is not so familiar with any truth but Genius will represent it in a strange light to it. Let the seer bring down his broad eye to the most stale and trivial fact, and he will make you believe it a new planet in the sky.

As to criticism, man has never to make allowance to man; there is naught to excuse, naught to bear in mind.

All the past is here present to be tried; let it approve itself if it can.

GROWTH

We are not apt to remember that we grow. It is curious to reflect how the maiden waiteth patiently, confiding as the unripe houstonia of the meadow, for the slow moving years to work their will with her, — perfect and ripen her, — like it to be fanned by the wind, watered by the rain, and receive her education at the hands of nature.

These young buds of manhood in the streets are like buttercups in the meadows, — surrendered to nature as they.

Nov. 7. I was not aware till to-day of a rising and risen generation. Children appear to me as raw as the fresh fungi on a fence rail. By what degrees of consanguinity is this succulent and rank-growing slip of manhood related to me? What is it but another herb, ranging all the kingdoms of nature, drawing in sustenance by a thousand roots and fibres from all soils.

LACONICISM

Nov. 8. Prometheus' answer to Io's question, who has bound him to the rock, is a good instance: —

Βούλουμα μὲν τὸ δῖον, Ἡφαίστου δὲ χείρ.
(The will indeed of Zeus, of Vulcan the hand.)

Also: —

Πταίσας δὲ τῷδε πρὸς κακῷ, μαθήσεται,
Ὅσον τό, τ' ἄρχειν καὶ τὸ δουλούειν δίχα.

Such naked speech is the standing aside of words to make room for thoughts.

REGRET

Nov. 13. Make the most of your regrets; never smother your sorrow, but tend and cherish it till it come to have a separate and integral interest. To regret deeply is to live afresh. By so doing you will be astonished to find yourself restored once more to all your emoluments.

DESPONDENCY

Nov. 14. There is nowhere any apology for despondency. Always there is life which, rightly lived, implies a divine satisfaction. I am soothed by the rain-drops on the door-sill; every globule that pitches thus confidently from the eaves to the ground is my life insurance. Disease and a rain-drop cannot coexist. The east wind is not itself consumptive, but has enjoyed a rare health from of old. If a fork or brand stand erect, *good* is portended by it. They are the warrant of universal innocence.

Nov. 19. FAREWELL

Light-hearted, thoughtless, shall I take my way,
When I to thee this being have resigned,
Well knowing where, upon a future day,
With us'rer's craft more than myself to find.

LINNÆUS

Nov. 22. Linnæus, setting out for Lapland, surveys his "comb" and "spare shirt," "leather breeches," and "gauze cap to keep off gnats," with as much complacency as Buonaparte would a park of artillery to be used in the Russian Campaign. His eye is to take in

fish, flower, and bird, quadruped and biped. The quiet bravery of the man is admirable. These facts have even a *novel* interest.[1]

Nov. 29. Many brave men have there been, thank Fortune, but I shall never grow brave by comparison. When I remember myself I shall forget them.

BRAVERY

Dec. 2. A rare landscape immediately suggests a suitable inhabitant, whose breath shall be its wind, whose moods its seasons, and to whom it will always be fair. To be chafed and worried, and not as serene as Nature, does not become one whose nature is as steadfast as she. We do all stand in the front ranks of the battle every moment of our lives; where there is a brave man there is the thickest of the fight, there the post of honor. Not he who procures a substitute to go to Florida is exempt from service; he gathers his laurels in another field. Waterloo is not the only battle-ground: as many and fatal guns are pointed at my breast now as are contained in the English arsenals.

[*Undated.*] [2] NOON

Straightway dissolved,
Like to the morning mists — or rather like the subtler
mists of noon —

[1] [*Excursions*, p. 107; Riv. 131, 132.]

[2] [This comes at the end of the first book of Journal transcripts (1837–39) and follows immediately a bit of verse dated Oct. 16, 1838, which has been included in its proper chronological place.]

Stretched I far up the neighboring mountain's sides,
Adown the valleys, through the nether air,
Bathing, with fond expansiveness of soul,
The tiniest blade as the sublimest cloud.

What time the bittern, solitary bird,
Hides now her head amid the whispering fern,
And not a paddock vexes all the shore,
Nor feather ruffles the incumbent air,
Save where the wagtail interrupts the noon.

FROM A CHAPTER ON BRAVERY. — *Script*

Dec. Bravery deals not so much in resolute action, as in healthy and assured rest. Its palmy state is a staying at home, and compelling alliance in all directions.[1]

The brave man never heareth the din of war; he is trustful and unsuspecting, so observant of the least trait of good or beautiful that, if you turn toward him the dark side of anything, he will still see only the bright.

One moment of serene and confident life is more glorious than a whole campaign of daring. We should be ready for all issues, not daring to die but daring to live. To the brave even danger is an ally.

In their unconscious daily life all are braver than they know. Man slumbers and wakes in his twilight with the confidence of noonday; he is not palsied nor struck

[1] [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, p. 277: *Misc.*, Riv. 35. *The Service*, p. 1.]

dumb by the inexplicable riddle of the universe. A mere surveyor's report or clause in a preëmption bill contains matter of quite extraneous interest, of a subdued but confident tone, evincing such a steadiness in the writer as would have done wonders at Bunker's Hill or Marathon. Where there is the collected eye, there will not fail the effective hand; χεὶρ δ' ὁρᾷ τὸ δράσιμον.

Science is always brave, for to know is to know good; doubt and danger quail before her eye. What the coward overlooks in his hurry, she calmly scrutinizes, breaking ground like a pioneer for the array of arts in her train. Cowardice is unscientific, for there cannot be a science of ignorance. There may be a science of war. for that advances, but a retreat is rarely well conducted; if it is, then is it an orderly advance in the face of circumstances.[1]

If his fortune deserts him, the brave man in pity still abides by her. Samuel Johnson and his friend Savage, compelled by poverty to pass the night in the streets, resolve that they will stand by their country.

The state of complete manhood is virtue, and virtue and bravery are one. This truth has long been in the languages. All the relations of the subject are hinted at in the derivation and analogies of the Latin words *vir* and *virtus*, and the Greek ἀγαθός and ἄριστος. Language in its settled form is the record of men's second thoughts, a more faithful utterance than they can mo-

[1] [*Excursions*, p. 107 ; Riv. 132.]

mentarily give. What men say is so sifted and obliged to approve itself as answering to a common want, that nothing absolutely frivolous obtains currency in the language. The analogies of words are never whimsical and meaningless, but stand for real likenesses. Only the ethics of mankind, and not of any particular man, give point and vigor to our speech.

The coward was born one day too late, for he has never overtaken the present hour. He is the younger son of creation, who now waiteth till the elder decease.[1] He does not dwell on the earth as though he had a deed of the land in his pocket, — not as another lump of nature, as imperturbable an occupant as the stones in the field. He has only rented a few acres of time and space, and thinks that every accident portends the expiration of his lease. He is a non-proprietor, a serf, in his moral economy nomadic, having no fixed abode. When danger appears, he goes abroad and clings to straws.

Bravery and Cowardice are kindred correlatives with Knowledge and Ignorance, Light and Darkness, Good and Evil.

If you let a single ray of light through the shutter, it will go on diffusing itself without limit till it enlighten the world, but the shadow that was never so wide at first as rapidly contracts till it comes to naught. The shadow of the moon when it passes nearest the sun is lost in

[1] [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, p. 277; *Misc.*, Riv. 35. *The Service*, p. 1.]

space ere it can reach our earth to eclipse it. Always the *system* shines with uninterrupted light, for, as the sun is so much larger than any planet, no shadow can travel far into space. We may bask always in the light of the system, always may step back out of the shade. No man's shadow is as large as his body, if the rays make a right angle with the reflecting surface. Let our lives be passed under the equator, with the sun in the meridian.

There is no ill which may not be dissipated like the dark, if you let in a stronger light upon it. Overcome evil with good. Practice no such narrow economy as they whose bravery amounts to no more light than a farthing candle, before which most objects cast a shadow wider than themselves.[1]

It was a conceit of Plutarch, accounting for the preferences given to signs observed on the left hand, that men may have thought "things terrestrial and mortal directly over against heavenly and divine things, and do conjecture that the things which to us are on the left hand, the gods send down from their right hand." [2] If we are not blind, we shall see how a right hand is stretched over all, as well the unlucky as lucky, and that the ordering soul is only right-handed, distributing with one palm all our fates.[3]

Men have made war from a deeper instinct than peace. War is but the compelling of peace.[4]

[1] [*Week*, p. 376; Riv. 465. *The Service*, pp. 8, 9.]
[2] [Plutarch's *Morals*, "Roman Questions," lxviii.]
[3] [*The Service*, p. 9.] [4] [*The Service*. p. 12.]

When the world is declared under martial law, every Esau retakes his birthright, and what there is in him does not fail to appear. He wipes off all old scores and commences a new account. The world is interested to know how any soul will demean itself in so novel a position. But when war too, like commerce and husbandry, gets to be a routine, and men go about it as indented apprentices, the hero degenerates into a marine, and the standing army into a standing jest.

No pains are spared to do honor to the brave soldier. All guilds and corporations are taxed to provide him with fit harness and equipment. His coat must be red as the sunset, or blue as the heavens. Gold or silver, pinchbeck or copper, solid or superficial, mark him for fortune's favorite. The skill of a city enchases and tempers his sword-blade; the Tyrian dye confounds him with emperors and kings. Wherever he goes, music precedes and prepares the way for him. His life is a holiday, and the contagion of his example unhinges the universe. The world puts by work and comes out to stare. He is the one only man. He recognizes no time-honored casts and conventions, no fixtures but transfixtures, no governments at length settled on a permanent basis. One tap of the drum sets the political and moral harmonies all ajar. His ethics may well bear comparison with the priest's. He may rally, charge, retreat in an orderly manner, but never flee nor flinch.[1]

[1] [A pencil interlineation in this paragraph is as follows:] The soldier is the degenerate hero, as the priest is the degenerate saint; and the soldier and the priest are related as the hero and [the] saint. The

Each more melodious note I hear
Brings sad reproach to me,
That I alone afford the ear,
Who would the music be.[1]

The brave man is the sole patron of music;[2] he recognizes it for his mother-tongue, — a more mellifluous and articulate language than words, in comparison with which speech is recent and temporary. It is his voice. His language must have the same majestic movement and cadence that philosophy assigns to the heavenly bodies. The steady flux of his thought constitutes time in music. The universe falls in and keeps pace with it, which before proceeded singly and discordant. Hence are poetry and song. When Bravery first grew afraid and went to war, it took music along with it. The soul delighted still to hear the echo of its own voice. Especially the soldier insists on agreement and harmony always. Indeed, it is that friendship there is in war that makes it chivalrous and heroic. It was the dim sentiment of a noble friendship for the purest soul the world has seen, that gave to Europe a crusading era.[3]

The day of tilts and tournaments has gone by, but no herald summons us to the tournament of love.

one's virtue is bravery, the other's bravery virtue. Mankind still pay to the soldier the honors due only to the hero. They delight to do him honor. He is adorned with silver and gold and the colors of the rainbow, invested with outward splendor; music is for him especially, and his life is a holiday.

[1] [*The Service*, p. 11.] [2] [*Week*, p. 183; Riv. 228.]
[3] [*The Service*, p. 11.]

The brave warrior must have harmony if not melody at any sacrifice. Consider what shifts he makes. There are the bagpipe, the gong, the trumpet, the drum, — either the primitive central African or Indian, or the brass European. Ever since Jericho fell down before a blast of rams' horns, the martial and musical have gone hand in hand. If the soldier marches to the sack of a town, he must be preceded by drum and trumpet, which shall as it were identify his cause with the accordant universe. All woods and walls echo back his own spirit, and the hostile territory is then preoccupied for him. He is no longer insulated, but infinitely related and familiar. The roll-call musters for him all the forces of nature.[1]

All sounds, and more than all, silence, do fife and drum for us.[2] The least creaking doth whet all our senses and emit a tremulous light, like the aurora borealis, over things. As polishing expresses the vein in marble and the grain in wood, so music brings out what of heroic lurks anywhere.[3]

To the sensitive soul, the universe has its own fixed measure, which is its measure also, and, as a regular pulse is inseparable from a healthy body, so is its healthiness dependent on the regularity of its rhythm. In all sounds the soul recognizes its own rhythm, and seeks to express its sympathy by a correspondent movement of the limbs. When the body marches to the

[1] [*The Service*, p. 12.] [2] [*Week*, p. 183; Riv. 228.]
[3] [*Week*, p. 183; Riv. 227. *The Service*, p. 13.]

measure of the soul, then is true courage and invincible strength.[1]

The coward would reduce this thrilling sphere music to a universal wail, this melodious chant to a nasal cant. He thinks to conciliate all hostile influences by compelling his neighborbood into a partial concord with himself, but his music is no better than a jingle which is akin to a jar, — jars regularly recurring.[2]

He blows a feeble blast of slender melody, because nature can have no more sympathy with such a soul than it has of cheerful melody in itself. Hence hears he no accordant note in the universe, and is a coward, or consciously outcast and deserted man. But the brave man, without drum or trumpet, compels concord everywhere by the universality and tunefulness of his soul.[3]

"Take a metallic plate," says Coleridge, "and strew sand on it; sound a harmonic chord over the sand, and the grains will whirl about in circles, and other geometrical figures, all, as it were, depending on some point

[1] [*Week*, p. 183; Riv. 228. *The Service*, p. 14.]

[2] [*The Service*, p. 14. See also p. 151 of this volume.]

[3] [*The Service*, p. 15.] [In pencil on a fly-leaf of the Journal:] The coward substitutes for this thrilling sphere music a universal wail, for this melodious chant a nasal cant, and but whistles to keep his courage up. He blows a feeble blast of slender melody and can compel his neighborhood only into a partial concord with himself, because nature has but little sympathy with such a soul. Hence he hears no accordant note in the universe, and is a coward, or consciously outcast and deserted man. But the brave man, without drum or trumpet, compels concord everywhere by the universality and tunefulness of his soul.

relatively at rest. Sound a discord, and every grain will whisk about without any order at all, in no figures, and with no points of rest." The brave man is such a point of relative rest, over which the soul sounds ever a harmonic chord.

Music is either a sedative or a tonic to the soul.[1] I read that "Plato thinks the gods never gave men music, the science of melody and harmony, for mere delectation or to tickle the ear; but that the discordant parts of the circulations and beauteous fabric of the soul, and that of it that roves about the body, and many times, for want of tune and air, breaks forth into many extravagances and excesses, might be sweetly recalled and artfully wound up to their former consent and agreement."[2]

By dint of wind and stringed instruments the coward endeavors to put the best face on the matter, — whistles to keep his courage up.

There are some brave traits related by Plutarch; *e. g.*: "Homer acquaints us how Ajax, being to engage in a single combat with Hector, bade the Grecians pray to the gods for him; and while they were at their devotions, he was putting on his armor."

On another occasion, a storm arises, "which as soon as the pilot sees, he falls to his prayers, and invokes

[1] [*The Service*, p. 13.]

[2] [*Week*, pp. 183, 184; Riv. 228. *The Service*, p. 13. The quotation is from Plutarch's *Morals*, "Of Superstition."]

his tutelar dæmons, but neglects not in the meantime to hold to the rudder and let down the main yard."

"Homer directs his husbandman, before he either plow or sow, to pray to the terrestrial Jove and the venerable Ceres, but with his hand upon the plow-tail."

Ἀρχὴ γὰρ ὄντως τοῦ νικᾶν τὸ θαῤῥεῖν. (Verily, to be brave is the beginning of victory.)

The Romans "made Fortune surname to Fortitude," for fortitude is that alchemy that turns all things to good fortune. The man of fortitude, whom the Latins called *fortis*, is no other than that lucky person whom *fors* favors, or *vir summae fortis*. If we will, every bark may "carry Cæsar and Cæsar's fortune." The brave man stays at home. For an impenetrable shield, stand inside yourself; he was an arrant coward who first made shields of brass. For armor of proof, *mea virtute me involvo* (I wrap myself in my virtue);

> "Tumble me down, and I will sit
> Upon my ruins, smiling yet." [1]

The bravest deed, which for the most part is left quite out of history, which alone wants the staleness of a deed done and the uncertainty of a deed doing, is the life of a great man. To perform exploits is to be temporarily bold, as becomes a courage that ebbs and flows, the soul quite vanquished by its own deed subsiding into indifference and cowardice; but the exploit of a brave life consists in its momentary completeness.[2]

[1] [*The Service*, pp. 7, 8. See p. 154 of this volume.]
[2] [*The Service*, pp. 23, 24.]

FRIENDSHIP [1]

Fall of 1839. Then first I conceive of a true friendship, when some rare specimen of manhood presents itself. It seems the mission of such to commend virtue to mankind, not by any imperfect preaching of her word, but by their own carriage and conduct. We may then worship moral beauty without the formality of a religion.

They are some fresher wind that blows, some new fragrance that breathes. They make the landscape and the sky for us.

The rules of other intercourse are all inapplicable to this.

We are one virtue, one truth, one beauty. All nature is our satellite, whose light is dull and reflected. She is subaltern to us, — an episode to our poem; but we are primary, and radiate light and heat to the system.

I am only introduced once again to myself.

Conversation, contact, familiarity are the steps to it and instruments of it, but it is most perfect when these are done, and distance and time oppose no barrier.

I need not ask any man to be my friend, more than the sun the earth to be attracted by him. It is not his to give, nor mine to receive. I cannot pardon my enemy; let him pardon himself.

[1] [Cf. *Week*, pp. 274–307; Riv. 341–381.]

Commonly we degrade Love and Friendship by presenting them under the aspect of a trivial dualism.

What matter a few words more or less with my friend, — with all mankind; — they will still be my friends in spite of themselves. Let them stand aloof if they can! As though the most formidable distance could rob me of any real sympathy or advantage! No, when such interests are at stake, time, and distance, and difference fall into their own places.

But alas! to be actually separated from that parcel of heaven we call our friend, with the suspicion that we shall no more meet in nature, is source enough for all the elegies that ever were written. But the true remedy will be to recover our friend again piecemeal, wherever we can find a feature, as Æetes gathered up the members of his son, which Medea had strewn in her path.

The more complete our sympathy, the more our senses are struck dumb, and we are repressed by a delicate respect, so that to indifferent eyes we are least his friend, because no vulgar symbols pass between us. On after thought, perhaps, we come to fear that we have been the losers by such seeming indifference, but in truth that which withholds us is the bond between us.

My friend will be as much better than myself as my aspiration is above my performance.

This is most serene autumn weather. The chirp of crickets may be heard at noon over all the land. As in summer they are heard only at nightfall, so now by their incessant chirp they usher in the evening of the year.[1] The lively decay of autumn promises as infinite duration and freshness as the green leaves of spring.

[1] [*Excursions*, p. 108 ; Riv. 133.]

IV

1840

(ÆT. 22–23)

Jan. 10. THE FISHER'S SON [1]

I know the world where land and water meet,
By yonder hill abutting on the main;
One while I hear the waves incessant beat,
Then, turning round, survey the land again.

Within a humble cot that looks to sea,
Daily I breathe this curious warm life;
Beneath a friendly haven's sheltering lee
My noiseless day with myst'ry still is rife.

'T is here, they say, my simple life began;
And easy credit to the tale I lend,
For well I know 't is here I am a man.
But who will simply tell me of the end?

These eyes, fresh opened, spied the far-off Sea,
Which like a silent godfather did stand,
Nor uttered one explaining word to me,
But introducèd straight Godmother Land.

And yonder still stretches that silent main,
With many glancing ships besprinkled o'er;

[1] [Stanzas 8, 10, 11, 12, with revision, *Week*, p. 255; Riv. 317. Stanzas 2–5, 9, 13, *Familiar Letters*, Introduction.]

And earnest still I gaze and gaze again
Upon the selfsame waves and friendly shore,

Till like a watery humor on the eye
It still appears whichever way I turn,
Its silent waste and mute o'erarching sky
With close-shut eyes I clearly still discern.

And yet with lingering doubt I haste each morn
To see if ocean still my gaze will greet,
And with each day once more to life am born,
And tread once more the earth with infant feet.

My years are like a stroll upon the beach,
As near the ocean's edge as I can go;
My tardy steps its waves do oft o'erreach,
Sometimes I stay to let them overflow.

Infinite work my hands find there to do,
Gathering the relics which the waves upcast;
Each storm doth scour the deep for something new,
And every time the strangest is the last.

My sole employment 't is, and scrupulous care,
To place my gains beyond the reach of tides,
Each smoother pebble, and each shell more rare,
Which ocean kindly to my hand confides.

I have no fellow-laborer on the shore;
They scorn the strand who sail upon the sea;
Sometimes I think the ocean they've sailed o'er
Is deeper known upon the strand to me.

The middle sea can show no crimson dulse,
Its deeper waves cast up no pearls to view,
Along the shore my hand is on its pulse,
Whose feeble beat is elsewhere felt by few.

My neighbors come sometimes with lumb'ring carts,
As it would seem my pleasant toil to share,
But straightway take their loads to distant marts,
For only weeds and ballast are their care.

'T is by some strange coincidence, if I
Make common cause with ocean when he storms,
Who can so well support a separate sky,
And people it with multitude of forms.

Oft in the stillness of the night I hear
Some restless bird presage the coming din,
And distant murmurs faintly strike my ear
From some bold bluff projecting far within.

My stillest depths straightway do inly heave
More genially than rests the summer's calm;
The howling winds through my soul's cordage grieve,
Till every shelf and ledge gives the alarm.

Far from the shore the swelling billows rise,
And gathering strength come rolling to the land,
And, as each wave retires, and murmur dies,
I straight pursue upon the streaming sand,

Till the returning surge with gathered strength
Compels once more the backward way to take,

And, creeping up the beach a cable's length,
In many a thirsty hollow leaves a lake.

Oft as some ruling star my tide has swelled
The sea can scarcely brag more wrecks than I;
Ere other influence my waves has quelled,
The stanchest bark that floats is high and dry.

Jan. 19.
By a strong liking we prevail
Against the stoutest fort;
At length the fiercest heart will quail,
And our alliance court.

FRIENDS

Jan. 26. They are like air bubbles on water, hastening to flow together.

History tells of Orestes and Pylades, Damon and Pythias, but why should not we put to shame those old reserved worthies by a community of such?

Constantly, as it were through a remote skylight, I have glimpses of a serene friendship-land, and know the better why brooks murmur and violets grow.

This conjunction of souls, like waves which meet and break, subsides also backward over things, and gives all a fresh aspect.

I would live henceforth with some gentle soul such a life as may be conceived, double for variety, single for harmony, — two, only that we might admire at our one-

ness, — one, because indivisible. Such community to be a pledge of holy living. How could aught unworthy be admitted into our society? To listen with one ear to each summer sound, to behold with one eye each summer scene, our visual rays so to meet and mingle with the object as to be one bent and doubled; with two tongues to be wearied, and thought to spring ceaselessly from a double fountain.

POETRY

Jan. No definition of poetry is adequate unless it be poetry itself. The most accurate analysis by the rarest wisdom is yet insufficient, and the poet will instantly prove it false by setting aside its requisitions.[1] It is indeed all that we do not know.

The poet does not need to see how meadows are something else than earth, grass, and water, but how they are thus much. He does not need discover that potato blows are as beautiful as violets, as the farmer thinks, but only how good potato blows are.

The poem is drawn out from under the feet of the poet, his whole weight has rested on this ground.

It has a logic more severe than the logician's.

You might as well think to go in pursuit of the rainbow, and embrace it on the next hill, as to embrace the whole of poetry even in thought. The best book is

[1] [*Week*, p. 93; Riv. 116.]

only an advertisement of it, such as is sometimes sewed in with its cover.[1]

Its eccentric and unexplored orbit embraces the system.

Jan. 27. What a tame life we are living! How little heroic it is! Let us devise never so perfect a system of living, and straightway the soul leaves it to shuffle along its own way alone. It is easy enough to establish a durable and harmonious routine; immediately all parts of nature consent to it.[2] The sun-dial still points to the noon mark, and the sun rises and sets for it. The neighbors are never fatally obstinate when such a scheme is to be instituted; but forthwith all lend a hand, and ring the bell, and bring fuel and lights, and put by work and don their best garments, with an earnest conformity which matches the operations of nature. There is always a present and extant life which all combine to uphold, though its insufficiency is manifest enough.[3] Still the sing-song goes on.

Jan. 29. A friend in history looks like some premature soul. The nearest approach to a community of love in these days is like the distant breaking of waves on the seashore. An ocean there must be, for it washes our beach.

This alone do all men sail for, trade for, plow for, preach for, fight for.

[1] [*Week*, p. 93; Riv. 116.] [2] [*Week*, p. 132; Riv. 164.]
[3] [*Week*, p. 132; Riv. 165.]

ÆSCHYLUS

The Greeks, as the Southerns generally, expressed themselves with more facility than we in distinct and lively images, and as to the grace and completeness with which they treated the subjects suited to their genius they must be allowed to retain their ancient supremacy. But a rugged and uncouth array of thought, though never so modern, may rout them at any moment. It remains for other than Greeks to write the literature of the next century.

Æschylus had a clear eye for the commonest things. His genius was only an enlarged common sense. He adverts with chaste severity to all natural facts. His sublimity is Greek sincerity and simpleness, naked wonder which mythology had not helped to explain.

Tydeus' shield had for device

"An artificial heaven blazing with stars;
A bright full moon in the midst of the shield,
Eldest of stars, eye of night, is prominent."

The Greeks were stern but simple children in their literature. We have gained nothing by the few ages which we have the start of them. This universal wondering at those old men is as if a matured grown person should discover that the aspirations of his youth argued a diviner life than the contented wisdom of his manhood.

He is competent to express any of the common manly feelings. If his hero is to make a boast, it does not lack fullness, it is as boastful as could be desired; he has a flexible mouth, and can fill it readily with strong, round

words, so that you will say the man's speech wants nothing, he has left nothing unsaid, but he has actually wiped his lips of it.

Whatever the common eye sees at all and expresses as best it may, he sees uncommonly and describes with rare completeness. The multitude that thronged the theatre could no doubt go along with him to the end. The Greeks had no transcendent geniuses like Milton and Shakespeare, whose merit only posterity could fully appreciate.

The social condition of genius is the same in all ages. Æschylus was undoubtedly alone and without sympathy in his simple reverence for the mystery of the universe.

Feb. 10. CRITICISM ON AULUS PERSIUS FLACCUS [1]

Feb. 11. "Truth," says Lord Bacon, "may perhaps come to the price of a pearl, that sheweth best by day; but it will not rise to the price of a diamond or carbuncle, which sheweth best in varied lights." Like the pearl, truth shines with a steady but pale light which invites to introspection; it is intrinsically bright, not accidentally as the diamond. We seem to behold its rear always, as though it were not coming toward us but retiring from us. Its light is not reflected this way, but we see the sombre and wrong side of its rays. As the dust in his beams makes known that the sun shines.

[1] [The criticism was not transcribed here. The title was inserted doubtless as a memorandum and to record the date of its composition. See *Week*, p. 327; Riv. 405.]

Falsehoods that glare and dazzle are sloped toward us, reflecting full in our faces even the light of the sun. Wait till sunset, or go round them, and the falsity will be apparent.

It is never enough that our life is an easy one. We must live on the stretch; not be satisfied with a tame and undisturbed round of weeks and days, but retire to our rest like soldiers on the eve of a battle, looking forward with ardor to the strenuous sortie of the morrow.[1] "Sit not down in the popular seats and common level of virtues, but endeavor to make them heroical. Offer not only peace offerings but holocausts unto God." To the brave soldier the rust and leisure of peace are harder than the fatigues of war. As our bodies court physical encounters, and languish in the mild and even climate of the tropics, so our souls thrive best on unrest and discontent.[2]

He enjoys true leisure who has time to improve his soul's estate.

Feb. 12. Opposition is often so strong a likeness as to remind us of the difference.

Truth has properly no opponent, for nothing gets so far up on the other side as to be opposite. She looks broadcast over the field and sees no opponent.

The ring-leader of the mob will soonest be admitted into the councils of state.

[1] [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, p. 279; *Misc.*, Riv. 37.]

[2] [*The Service*, p. 20.]

Knavery is more foolish than folly, for that, half knowing its own foolishness, it still persists. The knave has reduced folly to a system, is the prudent, common-sense fool. The witling has the simplicity and directness of genius, is the inspired fool. His incomprehensible ravings become the creed of the dishonest of a succeeding era.

Feb. 13. An act of integrity is to an act of duty what the French verb *être* is to *devoir*. Duty is *ce que devrait être*.

Duty belongs to the understanding, but genius is not dutiful, the highest talent is dutiful. Goodness results from the wisest use of talent.

The perfect man has both genius and talent. The one is his head, the other his foot; by one he is, by the other he lives.

The unconsciousness of man is the consciousness of God, the end of the world.[1]

The very thrills of genius are disorganizing. The body is never quite acclimated to *its* atmosphere, but how often succumbs and goes into a decline!

Feb. 14. Beauty lives by rhymes. Double a deformity is a beauty. Draw this blunt quill over the paper, and fold it once transversely to the line, pressing it suddenly before the ink dries, and a delicately shaded and regular figure is the result, which art cannot surpass.[2]

[1] [*Week*, p. 351; Riv. 434.]

[2] [*Week*, p. 351; Riv. 434. A sheet with specimens of this familiar school-boy amusement is slipped into one of the manuscript Journal volumes.]

A very meagre natural history suffices to make me a child. Only their names and genealogy make me love fishes. I would know even the number of their fin-rays, and how many scales compose the lateral line. I fancy I am amphibious and swim in all the brooks and pools in the neighborhood, with the perch and bream, or doze under the pads of our river amid the winding aisles and corridors formed by their stems, with the stately pickerel. I am the wiser in respect to all knowledges, and the better qualified for all fortunes, for knowing that there is a minnow in the brook. Methinks I have need even of his sympathy, and to be his fellow in a degree. I do like him sometimes when he balances himself for an hour over the yellow floor of his basin.[1]

Feb. 15. The good seem to inhale a more generous atmosphere and be bathed in a more precious light than other men. Accordingly Virgil describes the *sedes beatas* thus: —

> "Largior hic campos aether et lumine vestit
> Purpureo : Solemque suum, sua sidera nôrunt."[2]

Feb. 16. Divination is prospective memory.

There is a kindred principle at the bottom of all affinities. The magnet cultivates a steady friendship with the pole, all bodies with all others. The friendliness of nature is that goddess Ceres who presides over every sowing and harvest, and we bless the same in sun and

[1] [*Excursions*, p. 118 ; Riv. 146.] [2] [*Week*, p. 406 ; Riv. 501.]

rain. The seed in the ground tarries for a season with its genial friends there; all the earths and grasses and minerals are its hosts, who entertain it hospitably, and plenteous crops and teeming wagons are the result.

Feb. 18. All romance is grounded on friendship. What is this rural, this pastoral, this poetical life but its invention? Does not the moon shine for Endymion? Smooth pastures and mild airs are for some Corydon and Phyllis. Paradise belongs to Adam and Eve. Plato's republic is governed by Platonic love.

Feb. 20. The coward's hope is suspicion, the hero's doubt a sort of hope. The gods neither hope nor doubt.

Feb. 22. The river is unusually high, owing to the melting of the snow. Men go in boats over their gardens and potato-fields, and all the children of the village are on tiptoe to see whose fence will be carried away next. Great numbers of muskrats, which have been driven out of their holes by the water, are killed by the sportsmen.

They are to us instead of the beaver. The wind from over the meadows is laden with a strong scent of musk, and by its racy freshness advertises us of an unexplored wildness. Those backwoods are not far off. I am affected by the sight of their cabins of mud and grass, raised four or five feet, along the river, as when I read of the Pyramids, or the barrows of Asia.[1]

People step brisker in the street for this unusual

[1] [*Excursions*, p. 114; Riv. 141.]

movement of the waters. You seem to hear the roar of a waterfall and the din of factories where the river breaks over the road.

Who would have thought that a few feet might not have been spared from the trunks of most trees? Such as grow in the meadows, and are now surrounded by that depth of water, have a dwarfish appearance. No matter whether they are longer or shorter, they are now equally out of proportion.

Feb. 24. THE FRESHET

A stir is on the Worcester hills,
And Nobscot too the valley fills;
Where scarce you 'd fill an acorn cup
In summer when the sun was up,
No more you 'll find a cup at all,
But in its place a waterfall.

O that the moon were in conjunction
To the dry land's extremest unction,
Till every dike and pier were flooded,
And all the land with islands studded,
For once to teach all human kind,
Both those that plow and those that grind,
There is no fixture in the land,
But all unstable is as sand.

The river swelleth more and more,
Like some sweet influence stealing o'er
The passive town; and for a while
Each tussock makes a tiny isle,

Where, on some friendly Ararat,
Resteth the weary water-rat.

No ripple shows Musketaquid,
Her very current e'en is hid,
As deepest souls do calmest rest
When thoughts are swelling in the breast;
And she, that in the summer's drought
Doth make a rippling and a rout,
Sleeps from Nawshawtuct to the Cliff,
Unruffled by a single skiff;
So like a deep and placid mind
Whose currents underneath it wind,
For by a thousand distant hills
The louder roar a thousand rills,
And many a spring which now is dumb,
And many a stream with smothered hum,
Doth faster well and swifter glide,
Though buried deep beneath the tide.

Our village shows a rural Venice,
Its broad lagunes where yonder fen is,
Far lovelier than the Bay of Naples
Yon placid cove amid the maples,
And in my neighbor's field of corn
I recognize the Golden Horn.

Here Nature taught from year to year,
When only red men came to hear,
Methinks 't was in this school of art
Venice and Naples learned their part,

But still their mistress, to my mind,
Her young disciples leaves behind.[1]

Feb. 26. The most important events make no stir on their first taking place, nor indeed in their effects directly. They seem hedged about by secrecy. It is concussion, or the rushing together of air to fill a vacuum, which makes a noise. The great events to which all things consent, and for which they have prepared the way, produce no explosion, for they are gradual, and create no vacuum which requires to be suddenly filled; as a birth takes place in silence, and is whispered about the neighborhood, but an assassination, which is at war with the constitution of things, creates a tumult immediately.

Corn grows in the night.[2]

Feb. 27. Some geniuses seem to hover in the horizon, like heat lightning, which is not accompanied with fertilizing rain to us, but we are obliged to rest contented with the belief that it is purifying the air somewhere. Others make known their presence by their effects, like that vivid lightning which is accompanied by copious rain and thunder and, though it clears our atmosphere, sometimes destroys our lives. Others still impart a steady and harmless light at once to large tracts, as the aurora borealis; and this phenomenon is hardest to be accounted for, some thinking it to be a reflection of the polar splendor, others a subtle fluid which pervades all

[1] [*Excursions*, pp. 120, 121; Riv. 148, 149.]
[2] [See pp. 174 and 263.]

things and tends always to the zenith. All are agreed that these are equally electrical phenomena, as some clever persons have shown by drawing a spark with their knuckles. Modern philosophy thinks it has drawn down lightning from the clouds.

Feb. 28. On the death of a friend, we should consider that the fates through confidence have devolved on us the task of a double living, that we have henceforth to fulfill the promise of our friend's life also, in our own, to the world.

Feb. 29. A friend advises by his whole behavior,[1] and never condescends to particulars; another chides away a fault, he loves it away. While he sees the other's error, he is silently conscious of it, and only the more loves truth himself, and assists his friend in loving it, till the fault is expelled and gently extinguished.

March 2. Love is the burden of all Nature's odes. The song of the birds is an epithalamium, a hymeneal. The marriage of the flowers spots the meadows and fringes the hedges with pearls and diamonds. In the deep water, in the high air, in woods and pastures, and the bowels of the earth, this is the employment and condition of all things.

March 4. I learned to-day that my ornithology had done me no service. The birds I heard, which fortunately did not come within the scope of my science,

[1] [*Week*, p. 300; Riv. 373.]

sung as freshly as if it had been the first morning of creation, and had for background to their song an untrodden wilderness, stretching through many a Carolina and Mexico of the soul.[1]

March 6. There is no delay in answering great questions; for them all things have an answer ready. The Pythian priestess gave her answers instantly, and oftttimes before the questions were fairly propounded. Great topics do not wait for past or future to be determined, but the state of the crops or Brighton market no bird concerns itself about.

March 8. The wind shifts from northeast and east to northwest and south, and every icicle which has tinkled on the meadow grass so long trickles down its stem and seeks its water level unerringly with a million comrades. In the ponds the ice cracks with a busy and inspiriting din and down the larger streams is whirled, grating hoarsely and crashing its way along, which was so lately a firm field for the woodman's team and the fox, sometimes with the tracks of the skaters still fresh upon it, and the holes cut for pickerel. Town committees inspect the bridges and causeways, as if by mere eye-force to intercede with the ice and save the treasury.

In the brooks the slight grating sound of small cakes of ice, floating with various speed, is full of content and promise, and where the water gurgles under a natural bridge, you may hear these hasty rafts hold conversa-

[1] [*Excursions*, p. 114; Riv. 140.]

tion in an undertone. Every rill is a channel for the juices of the meadow.[1] Last year's grasses and flower-stalks have been steeped in rain and snow, and now the brooks flow with meadow tea, — thoroughwort, mint, flagroot, and pennyroyal, all at one draught.

In the ponds the sun makes incroachments around the edges first, as ice melts in a kettle on the fire, darting his rays through this crevice, and preparing the deep water to act simultaneously on the under side.

Two years and twenty now have flown;
Their meanness time away has flung;
These limbs to man's estate have grown,
But cannot claim a manly tongue.

Amidst such boundless wealth without
I only still am poor within;
The birds have sung their summer out,
But still my spring does not begin.

In vain I see the morning rise,
In vain observe the western blaze,
Who idly look to other skies,
Expecting life by other ways.

The sparrow sings at earliest dawn,
Building her nest without delay;
All things are ripe to hear her song,
And now arrives the perfect day.

[1] [*Excursions*, pp. 119, 120; Riv. 147, 148.]

Shall I then wait the autumn wind,
Compelled to seek a milder ray,
And leave no empty nest behind,
No wood still echoing to my lay? [1]

March 16. The cabins of the settlers are the points whence radiate these rays of green and yellow and russet over the landscape; out of these go the axes and spades with which the landscape is painted. How much is the Indian summer and the budding of spring related to the cottage? Have not the flight of the crow and the gyrations of the hawk a reference to that roof?

The ducks alight at this season on the windward side of the river, in the smooth water, and swim about by twos and threes, pluming themselves and diving to peck at the root of the lily and the cranberries which the frost has not loosened. It is impossible to approach them within gunshot when they are accompanied by the gull, which rises sooner and makes them restless. They fly to windward first, in order to get under weigh, and are more easily reached by the shot if approached on that side. When preparing to fly, they swim about with their heads erect, and then, gliding along a few feet with their bodies just touching the surface, rise heavily with much splashing and fly low at first, if not suddenly aroused, but otherwise rise directly to survey the danger. The cunning sportsman is not in haste to desert

[1] [Stanzas 3, 2, and 5, in this order, with slight alterations, are printed in *Week*, p. 366 (Riv. 453), under the title of " The Poet's Delay."]

his position, but waits to ascertain if, having got themselves into flying trim, they will not return over the ground in their course to a new resting-place.

March 20. In society all the inspiration of my lonely hours seems to flow back on me, and then first have expression.

Love never degrades its votaries, but lifts them up to higher walks of being. They *over-look* one another. All other charities are swallowed up in this; it is gift and reward both.

We will have no vulgar Cupid for a go-between, to make us the playthings of each other, but rather cultivate an irreconcilable hatred instead of this.

March 21. The world is a fit theatre to-day in which any part may be acted. There is this moment proposed to me every kind of life that men lead anywhere, or that imagination can paint. By another spring I may be a mail-carrier in Peru, or a South African planter, or a Siberian exile, or a Greenland whaler, or a settler on the Columbia River, or a Canton merchant, or a soldier in Florida, or a mackerel-fisher off Cape Sable, or a Robinson Crusoe in the Pacific, or a silent navigator of any sea. So wide is the choice of parts, what a pity if the part of Hamlet be left out!

I am freer than any planet; no complaint reaches round the world. I can move away from public opinion, from government, from religion, from education, from society. Shall I be reckoned a ratable poll in the county of Middlesex, or be rated at one spear under the palm

trees of Guinea? Shall I raise corn and potatoes in Massachusetts, or figs and olives in Asia Minor? sit out the day in my office in State Street, or ride it out on the steppes of Tartary? For my Brobdingnag I may sail to Patagonia; for my Lilliput, to Lapland. In Arabia and Persia, my day's adventures may surpass the Arabian Nights' Entertainments. I may be a logger on the head waters of the Penobscot, to be recorded in fable hereafter as an amphibious river-god, by as sounding a name as Triton or Proteus; carry furs from Nootka to China, and so be more renowned than Jason and his golden fleece; or go on a South Sea exploring expedition, to be hereafter recounted along with the periplus of Hanno. I may repeat the adventures of Marco Polo or Mandeville.

These are but few of my chances, and how many more things may I do with which there are none to be compared!

Thank Fortune, we are not rooted to the soil, and here is not all the world. The buckeye does not grow in New England; the mockingbird is rarely heard here. Why not keep pace with the day, and not allow of a sunset nor fall behind the summer and the migration of birds? Shall we not compete with the buffalo, who keeps pace with the seasons, cropping the pastures of the Colorado till a greener and sweeter grass awaits him by the Yellowstone? The wild goose is more a cosmopolite than we; he breaks his fast in Canada, takes a luncheon in the Susquehanna, and plumes himself for the night in a Louisiana bayou. The pigeon

carries an acorn in his crop from the King of Holland's to Mason and Dixon's line. Yet we think if rail fences are pulled down and stone walls set up on our farms, bounds are henceforth set to our lives and our fates decided. If you are chosen town clerk, forsooth, you can't go to Tierra del Fuego this summer.[1]

But what of all this? A man may gather his limbs snugly within the shell of a mammoth squash, with his back to the northeastern boundary, and not be unusually straitened after all. Our limbs, indeed, have room enough, but it is our souls that rust in a corner. Let us migrate interiorly without intermission, and pitch our tent each day nearer the western horizon. The really fertile soils and luxuriant prairies lie on this side the Alleghanies. There has been no Hanno of the affections. Their domain is untravelled ground, to the Mogul's dominions.

March 22. While I bask in the sun on the shores of Walden Pond, by this heat and this rustle I am absolved from all obligation to the past. The council of nations may reconsider their votes; the grating of a pebble annuls them.[2]

March 27. How many are now standing on the European coast whom another spring will find located on the Red River, or Wisconsin! To-day we live an antediluvian life on our quiet homesteads, and to-morrow are transported to the turmoil and bustle of a crusading era.

[1] [*Walden*, p. 352; Riv. 493.] [2] [*Week*, p. 383; Riv. 474.]

Think how finite after all the known world is. Money coined at Philadelphia is a legal tender over how much of it! You may carry ship biscuit, beef, and pork quite round to the place you set out from. England sends her felons to the other side for safe keeping and convenience.

March 30. Pray, what things interest me at present? A long, soaking rain, the drops trickling down the stubble, while I lay drenched on a last year's bed of wild oats, by the side of some bare hill, ruminating. These things are of moment. To watch this crystal globe just sent from heaven to associate with me. While these clouds and this sombre drizzling weather shut all in, we two draw nearer and know one another. The gathering in of the clouds with the last rush and dying breath of the wind, and then the regular dripping of twigs and leaves the country o'er, the impression of inward comfort and sociableness, the drenched stubble and trees that drop beads on you as you pass, their dim outline seen through the rain on all sides drooping in sympathy with yourself. These are my undisputed territory. This is Nature's English comfort. The birds draw closer and are more familiar under the thick foliage, composing new strains on their roosts against the sunshine.

April 4. We look to windward for fair weather.

April 8. How shall I help myself? By withdrawing into the garret, and associating with spiders and mice,

determining to meet myself face to face sooner or later. Completely silent and attentive I will be this hour, and the next, and forever. The most positive life that history notices has been a constant retiring out of life, a wiping one's hands of it, seeing how mean it is, and having nothing to do with it.

April 9. I read in Cudworth how "Origen determines that the stars do not make but signify; and that the heavens are a kind of divine volume, in whose characters they that are skilled may read or spell out human events." Nothing can be truer, and yet astrology is possible. Men seem to be just on the point of discerning a truth when the imposition is greatest.

April 17. Farewell, etiquette! My neighbor inhabits a hollow sycamore, and I a beech tree. What then becomes of morning calls with cards, and deference paid to door-knockers and front entries, and presiding at one's own table?

April 19. The infinite bustle of Nature of a summer's noon, or her infinite silence of a summer's night, gives utterance to no dogma. They do not say to us even with a seer's assurance, that this or that law is immutable and so ever and only can the universe exist. But they are the indifferent occasion for all things and the annulment of all laws.

April 20. The universe will not wait to be explained. Whoever seriously attempts a theory of it is already

behind his age. His yea has reserved no nay for the morrow.

The wisest solution is no better than dissolution. Already the seer *whispers* his *convictions* to bare walls; no audience in the land can attend to them.

An early morning walk is a blessing for the whole day. To my neighbors who have risen in mist and rain I tell of a clear sunrise and the singing of birds as some traditionary mythus. I look back to those fresh but now remote hours as to the old dawn of time, when a solid and blooming health reigned and every deed was simple and heroic.

April 22. Thales was the first of the Greeks who taught that souls are immortal, and it takes equal wisdom to discern this old fact to-day. What the first philosopher taught, the last will have to repeat. The *world* makes no progress.

I cannot turn on my heel in a carpeted room. What a gap in the morning is a breakfast! A supper supersedes the sunset.

Methinks I hear the *ranz des vaches* and shall soon be tempted to desert.

Will not one thick garment suffice for three thin ones? Then I shall be less compound, and can lay my hand on myself in the dark.

May 14. A kind act or gift lays us under obligation not so much to the giver as to Truth and Love. We

must then be truer and kinder ourselves. Just in proportion to our sense of the kindness, and pleasure at it, is the debt paid. What is it to be *grateful* but to be *gratified*, — to be *pleased*? The nobly poor will dissolve all obligations by nobly accepting a kindness.

If we are not sensible of kindness, then indeed we incur a debt. Not to be pleased by generous deeds at any time, though done to another, but to sit crabbedly silent in a corner, what is it but a voluntary imprisonment for debt? It is to see the world through a grating. Not to let the light of virtuous actions shine on us at all times, through every crevice, is to live in a dungeon.

War is the sympathy of concussion. We would fain rub one against another. Its rub may be friction merely, but it would rather be titillation. We discover in the quietest scenes how faithfully war has copied the moods of peace. Men do not peep into heaven but they see embattled hosts there. Milton's heaven was a camp. When the sun bursts through the morning fog I seem to hear the din of war louder than when his chariot thundered on the plains of Troy. Every man is a warrior when he aspires. He marches on his post. The soldier is the practical idealist; he has no sympathy with matter, he revels in the annihilation of it. So do we all at times. When a freshet destroys the works of man, or a fire consumes them, or a Lisbon earthquake shakes them down, our sympathy with persons is swallowed up in a wider sympathy with the universe. A crash is apt to grate agreeably on our ears.

Let not the faithful sorrow that he has no ear for the more fickle harmonies of creation, if he is awake to the slower measure of virtue and truth. If his pulse does not beat in unison with the musician's quips and turns, it accords with the pulse-beat of the ages.[1]

June 11. We had appointed Saturday, August 31st, 1839, for the commencement of our White Mountain expedition. We awake to a warm, drizzling rain which threatens delay to our plans, but at length the leaves and grass are dried, and it comes out a mild afternoon, of such a sober serenity and freshness that Nature herself seems maturing some greater scheme of her own. All things wear the aspect of a fertile idleness. It is the eventide of the soul. After this long dripping and oozing from every pore Nature begins to respire again more healthily than ever. So with a vigorous shove we launch our boat from the bank, while the flags and bulrushes curtsy a God-speed, and drop silently down the stream.[2] As if we had launched our bark in the sluggish current of our thoughts, and were bound nowhither.

Gradually the village murmur subsides, as when one falls into a placid dream and on its Lethe tide is floated from the past into the future, or as silently as fresh thoughts awaken us to new morning or evening light.[3]

Our boat[4] was built like a fisherman's dory, with

[1] [*The Service*, p. 15.] [2] [*Week*, p. 12; Riv. 15.]

[3] [*Week*, p. 17; Riv. 21.]

[4] [T. finally sold this boat to Hawthorne, who changed the name from Musketaquid to Pond-Lily; and later it passed into Channing's hands. See Hawthorne's *American Note-Books*, Riv. pp. 318–321, and Channing, p. 13.]

thole-pins for four oars. Below it was green with a border of blue, as if out of courtesy [to] the green sea and the blue heavens. It was well calculated for service, but of consequence difficult to be dragged over shoal places or carried round falls.

A boat should have a sort of life and independence of its own. It is a sort of amphibious animal, a creature of two elements, a fish to swim and a bird to fly, related by one half of its structure to some swift and shapely fish and by the other to some strong-winged and graceful bird. The fins of the fish will tell where to set the oars, and the tail give some hint for the form and position of the rudder. And so may we learn where there should be the greatest breadth of beam and depth in the hold. The bird will show how to rig and trim the sails, and what form to give to the prow, that it may balance the boat and divide the air and water best.

The boat took to the water; from of old there had been a tacit league struck between these two, and now it gladly availed itself of the old law that the heavier shall float the lighter.

Two masts we had provided, one to serve for a tent-pole at night, and likewise other slender poles, that we might exchange the tedium of rowing for poling in shallow reaches. At night we lay on a buffalo-skin under a tent of drilled cotton eight feet high and as many in diameter, which effectually defended from dampness, so short a step is it from tiled roofs to drilled cotton, from carpeted floors to a buffalo-skin.[1]

[1] [*Week*, pp. 12, 13; Riv. 15–17.]

There were a few berries left still on the hills, hanging with brave content by the slenderest threads.[1]

As the night stole over, such a freshness stole across the meadow that every blade of cut-grass seemed to teem with life.[2]

We stole noiselessly down the stream, occasionally driving a pickerel from the covert of the pads, or a bream from her nest, and the small green bittern would now and then sail away on sluggish wings from some recess of the shore.[3] With its patient study by rocks and sandy capes, has it wrested the whole of her secret from Nature yet? It has looked out from its dull eye for so long, standing on one leg, on moon and stars sparkling through silence and dark, and now what a rich experience is its! What says it of stagnant pools, and reeds, and damp night fogs? It would be worth while to look in the eye which has been open and seeing at such hours and in such solitudes. When I behold that dull yellowish green, I wonder if my own soul is not a bright, invisible green. I would fain lay my eye side by side with its and learn of it.[4]

End of my Journal of 546 *pages.*[5]

[1] [*Week*, p. 19; Riv. 24.]

[2] [*Week*, p. 37; Riv. 47.]

[3] [*Week*, p. 17; Riv. 21.]

[4] [*Week*, p. 250; Riv. 310, 311.]

[5] [This was Thoreau's first journal, from which he made the transcripts which are now the only representatives of his early diarizing. See p. 188, where Journal of 396 pages ends.]

June 14.

Λόγος τοῦ ἔργου ἄνευ ὕλης. — *Aristotle's definition of art.*[1]

Ὅ χρή σε νοεῖν νόου ἄνθει. — *Chaldaic Oracles.*

Ἐγώ εἰμι πᾶν τὸ γεγονὸν, καὶ ὂν, καὶ ἐσόμενον, καὶ τὸν ἐμὸν πέπλον οὐδείς πω θνητὸς ἀπεκάλυψεν. — *Inscription upon the temple at Sais.*

Plotinus aimed at ἐπαφήν, and παρουσίαν ἐπιστήμης κρείττονα, and τὸ ἑαυτὸν κέντρον τῷ οἷον πάντων κέντρῳ συνάπτειν.

Μέλλει τὸ Θεῖον δ' ἐστὶ τοιοῦτον φύσει. — EURIPIDES in *Orestes.*

"The right Reason is in part divine, in part human; the second can be expressed, but no language can translate the first." — EMPEDOCLES.

"In glory and in joy,
Behind his plough, upon the mountain-side!" [2]

I seemed to see the woods wave on a hundred mountains, as I read these lines, and the distant rustling of their leaves reached my ear.

June 15. I stood by the river to-day considering the forms of the elms reflected in the water. For every oak

[1] [*Week*, p. 386; Riv. 476.]

[2] [Wordsworth, incorrectly quoted. The line reads, —
"Following his plough, along the mountain-side."]

and birch, too, growing on the hilltop, as well as for elms and willows, there is a graceful ethereal tree making down from the roots, as it were the original idea of the tree, and sometimes Nature in high tides brings her mirror to its foot and makes it visible.[1] Anxious Nature sometimes reflects from pools and puddles the objects which our grovelling senses may fail to see relieved against the sky with the pure ether for background.

It would be well if we saw ourselves as in perspective always, impressed with distinct outline on the sky, side by side with the shrubs on the river's brim. So let our life stand to heaven as some fair, sunlit tree against the western horizon, and by sunrise be planted on some eastern hill to glisten in the first rays of the dawn.

Why always insist that men incline to the moral side of their being? Our life is not all moral. Surely, its actual phenomena deserve to be studied impartially. The science of Human Nature has never been attempted, as the science of Nature has. The dry light has never shone on it. Neither physics nor metaphysics have touched it.

We have not yet met with a sonnet, genial and affectionate, to prophane swearing, breaking on the still night air, perhaps, like the hoarse croak of some bird. Noxious weeds and stagnant waters have their lovers, and the utterer of oaths must have honeyed lips, and be another Attic bee after a fashion, for only prevalent and essential harmony and beauty can employ the laws of sound and of light.

[1] [*Week*, pp. 44, 45; Riv. 56.]

Trees Reflected in the River

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June 16. The river down which we glided for that long afternoon was like a clear drop of dew with the heavens and the landscape reflected in it. And as evening drew on, faint purple clouds began to be reflected in its water, and the cow-bells tinkled louder and more incessantly on the banks, and like shy water-rats we stole along near the shore, looking out for a place to pitch our camp.[1]

It seems insensibly to grow lighter as night shuts in; the furthest hamlet begins to be revealed, which before lurked in the shade of the noon.[2] It twinkles now through the trees like some fair evening star darting its ray across valley and wood.

Would it not be a luxury to stand up to one's chin in some retired swamp for a whole summer's day, scenting the sweet-fern and bilberry blows, and lulled by the minstrelsy of gnats and mosquitoes? A day passed in the society of those Greek sages, such as described in the "Banquet" of Xenophon, would not be comparable with the dry wit of decayed cranberry vines, and the fresh Attic salt of the moss beds. Say twelve hours of genial and familiar converse with the leopard frog. The sun to rise behind alder and dogwood, and climb buoyantly to his meridian of three hands' breadth, and finally sink to rest behind some bold western hummock. To hear the evening chant of the mosquito from a thousand green chapels, and the bittern begin to boom from his concealed fort like a sunset gun! Surely, one may as profitably be soaked in the juices of a marsh for

[1] [*Week*, pp. 37, 38; Riv. 47.] [2] [*Week*, p. 38; Riv. 47, 48.]

one day, as pick his way dry-shod over sand. Cold and damp, — are they not as rich experience as warmth and dryness? [1]

So is not shade as good as sunshine, night as day? Why be eagles and thrushes always, and owls and whip-poor-wills never?

I am pleased to see the landscape through the bottom of a tumbler, it is clothed in such a mild, quiet light, and the barns and fences checker and partition it with new regularity. These rough and uneven fields stretch away with lawn-like smoothness to the horizon. The clouds are finely distinct and picturesque, the light-blue sky contrasting with their feathery whiteness. They are fit drapery to hang over Persia.[2] The smith's shop, resting in such a Grecian light, is worthy to stand beside the Parthenon. The potato and grain fields are such gardens as he imagines who has schemes of ornamental husbandry.

If I were to write of the dignity of the farmer's life, I would behold his farms and crops through a tumbler. All the occupations of men are ennobled so.

Our eyes, too, are convex lenses, but we do not learn with the eyes; they introduce us, and we learn after by converse with things.

June 17. Our lives will not attain to be spherical by lying on one or the other side forever; but only by resigning ourselves to the law of gravity in us, will our axis become coincident with the celestial axis, and

[1] [*Week*, pp. 319, 320; Riv. 395, 396.] [2] [*Week*, p. 45; Riv. 56, 57.]

[only] by revolving incessantly through all circles, shall we acquire a perfect sphericity.[1]

Men are inclined to lay the chief stress on likeness and not on difference. We seek to know how a thing is related to us, and not if it is strange. We call those bodies warm whose temperature is many degrees below our own, and never those cold which are warmer than we. There are many degrees of warmth below blood heat, but none of cold above it.[2]

Even the motto "Business before friends" admits of a high interpretation. No interval of time can avail to defer friendship. The concerns of time must be attended to in time. I need not make haste to explore the whole secret of a star; if it were vanished quite out of the firmament, so that no telescope could longer discover it, I should not despair of knowing it entirely one day.

We meet our friend with a certain awe, as if he had just lighted on the earth, and yet as if we had some title to be acquainted with him by our old familiarity with sun and moon.

June 18. I should be pleased to meet man in the woods. I wish he were to be encountered like wild caribous and moose.

I am startled when I consider how little I am *actually* concerned about the things I write in my journal.

[1] [*The Service*, p. 6.] [2] [*Week*, p. 280; Riv. 347.]

Think of the Universal History, and then tell me, — when did burdock and plantain sprout first? [1]

A fair land, indeed, do books spread open to us, from the Genesis down; but alas! men do not take them up kindly into their own being, and breathe into them a fresh beauty, knowing that the grimmest of them belongs to such warm sunshine and still moonlight as the present.

Of what consequence whether I stand on London bridge for the next century, or look into the depths of this bubbling spring which I have laid open with my hoe?

June 19. The other day I rowed in my boat a free, even lovely young lady, and, as I plied the oars, she sat in the stern, and there was nothing but she between me and the sky.[2] So might all our lives be picturesque if they were free enough, but mean relations and prejudices intervene to shut out the sky, and we never see a man as simple and distinct as the man-weathercock on a steeple.

The faint bugle notes which I hear in the west seem to flash on the horizon like heat lightning.[3] Cows low in the street more friendly than ever, and the note of the whip-poor-will, borne over the fields, is the voice with which the woods and moonlight woo me.

I shall not soon forget the sounds which lulled me when falling asleep on the banks of the Merrimack.

[1] [*Week*, p. 163; Riv. 203.] [2] [*Week*, p. 45; Riv. 57.]
[3] [*The Service*, p. 14.]

Far into night I hear some tyro beating a drum incessantly with a view to some country muster, and am thrilled by an infinite sweetness as of a music which the breeze drew from the sinews of war. I think of the line, —

"When the drum beat at dead of night."

How I wish it would wake the whole world to march to its melody, but still it drums on alone in the silence and the dark. Cease not, thou drummer of the night, thou too shalt have thy reward. The stars and the firmament hear thee, and their aisles shall echo thy beat till its call is answered, and the forces are mustered. The universe is attentive as a little child to thy sound, and trembles as if each stroke bounded against an elastic vibrating firmament. I should be contented if the night never ended, for in the darkness heroism will not be deferred, and I see fields where no hero has couched his lance.[1]

June 20. Perfect sincerity and transparency make a great part of beauty, as in dewdrops, lakes, and diamonds. A spring is a cynosure in the fields. All Muscovy glitters in the minute particles of mica on its bottom, and the ripples cast their shadows flickeringly on the white sand, as the clouds which flit across the landscape.

Something like the woodland sounds will be heard to echo through the leaves of a good book. Sometimes I hear the fresh emphatic note of the oven-bird, and am

[1] [*Week*, p. 181; Riv. 224, 225.]

tempted to turn many pages; sometimes the hurried chuckling sound of the squirrel when he dives into the wall.

If we only see clearly enough how mean our lives are, they will be splendid enough. Let us remember not to strive upwards too long, but sometimes drop plumb down the other way, and wallow in meanness. From the deepest pit we may see the stars, if not the sun. Let us have presence of mind enough to sink when we can't swim. At any rate, a carcass had better lie on the bottom than float an offense to all nostrils. It will not be falling, for we shall ride wide of the earth's gravity as a star, and always be drawn upward still, — *semper cadendo nunquam cadit*, — and so, by yielding to universal gravity, at length become fixed stars.

Praise begins when things are seen partially. We begin to praise when we begin to see that a thing needs our assistance.

When the heavens are obscured to us, and nothing noble or heroic appears, but we are oppressed by imperfection and shortcoming on all hands, we are apt to suck our thumbs and decry our fates. As if nothing were to be done in cloudy weather, or, if heaven were not accessible by the upper road, men would not find out a lower. Sometimes I feel so cheap that I am inspired, and could write a poem about it, — but straightway I cannot, for I am no longer mean. Let me know that I am ailing, and I am well. We should not always

beat off the impression of trivialness, but make haste to welcome and cherish it. Water the weed till it blossoms; with cultivation it will bear fruit. There are two ways to victory, — to strive bravely, or to yield. How much pain the last will save we have not yet learned.

June 21. I shall not soon forget my first night in a tent, — how the distant barking of dogs for so many still hours revealed to me the riches of the night. Who would not be a dog and bay the moon? [1]

I never feel that I am inspired unless my body is also. It too spurns a tame and commonplace life. They are fatally mistaken who think, while they strive with their minds, that they may suffer their bodies to stagnate in luxury or sloth. The body is the first proselyte the Soul makes. Our life is but the Soul made known by its fruits, the body. The whole duty of man may be expressed in one line, — Make to yourself a perfect body.

June 22. What a man knows, that he does.

It is odd that people will wonder how Shakespeare could write as he did without knowing Latin, or Greek, or geography, as if these were of more consequence than to know how to whistle. They are not backward to recognize Genius, — how it dispenses with those furtherances which others require, leaps where they

[1] [*Week*, pp. 39, 40 ; Riv. 49, 50.]

crawl, — and yet they never cease to marvel that so it was, — that it was Genius, and helped itself.

Nothing can shock a truly brave man but dullness. One can tolerate many things. What mean these sly, suspicious looks, as if you were an odd fish, a piece of crockery-ware to be tenderly handled? Surely people forget how many rebuffs every man has experienced in his day, — perhaps has fallen into a horsepond, eaten freshwater clams, or worn one shirt for a week without washing. Cannot a man be as calmly tolerant as a potato field in the sun, whose equanimity is not disturbed by Scotch thistles over the wall, but there it smiles and waxes till the harvest, let thistles mount never so high? You cannot receive a shock, unless you have an electric affinity for that which shocks you. Have no affinity for what is shocking.[1]

Do not present a gleaming edge to ward off harm, for that will oftenest attract the lightning, but rather be the all-pervading ether which the lightning does not strike but purify. Then will the rudeness or profanity of your companion be like a flash across the face of your sky, lighting up and revealing its serene depths.[2] Earth cannot shock the heavens; but its dull vapor and foul smoke make a bright cloud spot in the ether, and anon the sun, like a cunning artificer, will cut and paint it, and set it for a jewel in the breast of the sky.[3]

[1] [*Week*, p. 304; Riv. 378.]
[2] [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, p. 277; *Misc.*, Riv. 35.]
[3] [*The Service*, p. 2.]

When we are shocked at vice we express a lingering sympathy with it. Dry rot, rust, and mildew shock no man, for none is subject to them.

June 23. We Yankees are not so far from right, who answer one question by asking another. Yes and No are lies. A true answer will not aim to establish anything, but rather to set all well afloat. All answers are in the future, and day answereth to day. Do we think we can anticipate them?

In Latin, to respond is to pledge one's self before the gods to do faithfully and honorably, as a man should, in any case. This is good.

Music soothes the din of philosophy and lightens incessantly over the heads of sages.[1]

How can the language of the poet be more expressive than nature? He is content that what he has already read in simple characters, or indifferently in all, be translated into the same again.

He is the true artist whose life is his material; every stroke of the chisel must enter his own flesh and bone and not grate dully on marble.[2]

The Springs. — What is any man's discourse to me if I am not sensible of something in it as steady and cheery as the creak of the crickets? In it the woods must be relieved against the sky. Men tire me when I am not

[1] [*The Service*, p. 13.] [2] [*The Service*, p. 24.]

constantly greeted and cheered in their discourse, as it were by the flux of sparkling streams.

I cannot see the bottom of the sky, because I cannot see to the bottom of myself. It is the symbol of my own infinity. My eye penetrates as far into the ether as that depth is inward from which my contemporary thought springs.

Not by constraint or severity shall you have access to true wisdom, but by abandonment, and childlike mirthfulness. If you would know aught, be gay before it.

June 24. When I read Cudworth I find I can tolerate all, — atomists, pneumatologists, atheists, and theists, — Plato, Aristotle, Leucippus, Democritus, and Pythagoras. It is the attitude of these men, more than any communication, which charms me. It is so rare to find a man musing. But between them and their commentators there is an endless dispute. But if it come to that, that you compare notes, then you are all wrong. As it is, each takes me up into the serene heavens, and paints earth and sky. Any sincere thought is irresistible; it lifts us to the zenith, whither the smallest bubble rises as surely as the largest.

Dr. Cudworth does not consider that the belief in a deity is as great a heresy as exists. Epicurus held that the gods were "of human form, yet were so thin and subtile, as that, comparatively with our terrestrial bodies, they might be called incorporeal; they having not so much *carnem* as *quasi-carnem*, nor *sanguinem* as *quasi-sanguinem*, a certain kind of aerial or ethereal

flesh and blood." This, which Cudworth pronounces "romantical," is plainly as good doctrine as his own. As if any sincere thought were not the best sort of truth!

There is no doubt but the highest morality in the books is rhymed or measured, — is, in form as well as substance, poetry. Such is the scripture of all nations. If I were to compile a volume to contain the condensed wisdom of mankind, I should quote no rhythmless line.[1]

Not all the wit of a college can avail to make one harmonious line. It never *happens*. It may get so as to jingle, but a jingle is akin to a jar, — jars regularly recurring.[2]

So delicious is plain speech to my ears, as if I were to be more delighted by the whistling of the shot than frightened by the flying of the splinters, I am content, I fear, to be quite battered down and made a ruin of. I outgeneral myself when I direct the enemy to my vulnerable points.

The loftiest utterance of Love is, perhaps, sublimely satirical. Sympathy with what is sound makes sport of what is unsound.

Cliffs. Evening. — Though the sun set a quarter of an hour ago, his rays are still visible, darting half-way to the zenith. That glowing morrow in the west flashes on me like a faint presentiment of morning when I am

[1] [*Week*, pp. 93, 94; Riv. 116, 117.] [2] [See p. 104.]

falling asleep. A dull mist comes rolling from the west, as if it were the dust which day has raised. A column of smoke is rising from the woods yonder, to uphold heaven's roof till the light comes again. The landscape, by its patient resting there, teaches me that all good remains with him that waiteth, and that I shall sooner overtake the dawn by remaining here, than by hurrying over the hills of the west.

Morning and evening are as like as brother and sister. The sparrow and thrush sing and the frogs peep for both.

The woods breathe louder and louder behind me. With what hurry-skurry night takes place! The wagon rattling over yonder bridge is the messenger which day sends back to night; but the dispatches are sealed. In its rattle the village seems to say, This one sound, and I have done.

Red, then, is Day's color; at least it is the color of his heel. He is 'stepping westward.' We only notice him when he comes and when he goes.

With noble perseverance the dog bays the stars yonder. I too, like thee, walk alone in this strange, familiar night, my voice, like thine, beating against its friendly concave; and barking I hear only my own voice. 10 o'clock.

June 25. Let me see no other conflict but with prosperity. If my path run on before me level and smooth, it is all a mirage; in reality it is steep and arduous as a chamois pass. I will not let the years roll over me like a Juggernaut car.

We will warm us at each other's fire. Friendship is not such a cold refining process as a double sieve, but a glowing furnace in which all impurities are consumed.

Men have learned to touch before they scrutinize, — to shake hands, and not to stare.

June 26. The best poetry has never been written, for when it might have been, the poet forgot it, and when it was too late remembered it; or when it might have been, the poet remembered it, and when it was too late forgot it.

The highest condition of art is artlessness.

Truth is always paradoxical.

He will get to the goal first who stands stillest.

There is one let better than any help, and that is, — *Let-alone.*

By sufferance you may escape suffering.

He who resists not at all will never surrender.

When a dog runs at you, whistle for him.

Say, Not so, and you will outcircle the philosophers.

Stand outside the wall, and no harm can reach you. The danger is that you be walled in with it.

June 27. I am living this 27th of June, 1840, a dull, cloudy day and no sun shining. The clink of the smith's hammer sounds feebly over the roofs, and the wind is sighing gently, as if dreaming of cheerfuler days. The farmer is plowing in yonder field, craftsmen are busy in the shops, the trader stands behind the counter, and all works go steadily forward. But I will have nothing to do; I will tell fortune that I play no game with her,

and she may reach me in my Asia of serenity and indolence if she can.

For an impenetrable shield, stand inside yourself.[1]

He was no artist, but an artisan, who first made shields of brass.[2]

Unless we meet religiously, we prophane one another. What was the consecrated ground round the temple, we have used as no better than a domestic court.

Our friend's is as holy a shrine as any God's, to be approached with sacred love and awe. Veneration is the measure of Love. Our friend answers ambiguously, and sometimes before the question is propounded, like the oracle of Delphi. He forbears to ask explanation, but doubts and surmises darkly with full faith, as we silently ponder our fates.

In no presence are we so susceptible to shame. Our hour is a sabbath, our abode a temple, our gifts peace offerings, our conversation a communion, our silence a prayer. In prophanity we are absent, in holiness near, in sin estranged, in innocence reconciled.

June 28. The prophane never hear music; the holy ever hear it. It is God's voice, the divine breath audible. Where it is heard, there is a sabbath. It is omnipotent; all things obey it as they obey virtue. It is the herald of virtue.[3] It passes by sorrow, for grief hangs its harp on the willows.

[1] [See p. 106.] [2] [See p. 106.] [3] [*The Service*, p. 12.]

June 29. Of all phenomena, my own race are the most mysterious and undiscoverable. For how many years have I striven to meet one, even on common manly ground, and have not succeeded!

June 30. I sailed from Fair Haven last evening as gently and steadily as the clouds sail through the atmosphere. The wind came blowing blithely from the southwest fields, and stepped into the folds of our sail like a winged horse, pulling with a strong and steady impulse. The sail bends gently to the breeze, as swells some generous impulse of the heart, and anon flutters and flaps with a kind of human suspense. I could watch the motions of a sail forever, they are so rich and full of meaning. I watch the play of its pulse, as if it were my own blood beating there. The varying temperature of distant atmospheres is graduated on its scale. It is a free, buoyant creature, the bauble of the heavens and the earth. A gay pastime the air plays with it. If it swells and tugs, it is because the sun lays his windy finger on it. The breeze it plays with has been outdoors so long. So thin is it, and yet so full of life; so noiseless when it labors hardest, so noisy and impatient when least serviceable.[1] So am I blown on by God's breath, so flutter and flap, and fill gently out with the breeze.

In this fresh evening each blade and leaf looks as if it had been dipped in an icy liquid greenness. Let eyes that ache come here and look, — the sight will be a sovereign eyewater, — or else wait and bathe them in the dark.

[1] [*Week*, pp. 384, 385; Riv. 475.]

We go forth into the fields, and there the wind blows freshly onward, and still on, and we must make new efforts not to be left behind. What does the dogged wind intend, that, like a willful cur, it will not let me turn aside to rest or content? Must it always reprove and provoke me, and never welcome me as an equal?

The truth shall prevail and falsehood discover itself, as long as the wind blows on the hills.

A man's life should be a stately march to a sweet but unheard music, and when to his fellows it shall seem irregular and inharmonious, he will only be stepping to a livelier measure, or his nicer ear hurry him into a thousand symphonies and concordant variations. There will be no halt ever, but at most a marching on his post, or such a pause as is richer than any sound, when the melody runs into such depth and wildness as to be no longer heard, but implicitly consented to with the whole life and being. He will take a false step never, even in the most arduous times, for then the music will not fail to swell into greater sweetness and volume, and itself rule the movement it inspired.[1]

I have a deep sympathy with war, it so apes the gait and bearing of the soul.

Value and effort are as much coincident as weight and a tendency to fall. In a very wide but true sense, effort is the deed itself, and it is only when these sensible stuffs intervene, that our attention is distracted from

[1] [*The Service*, pp. 15, 16.]

the deed to the accident. It is never the deed men praise, but some marble or canvas which are only a staging to the real work.[1]

July 1. To be a man is to do a man's work; always our resource is to endeavor. We may well say, Success to our endeavors. Effort is the prerogative of virtue.[2]

The true laborer is recompensed by his labor, not by his employer. Industry is its own wages. Let us not suffer our hands to lose one jot of their handiness by looking behind to a mean recompense, knowing that our true endeavor cannot be thwarted, nor we be cheated of our earnings unless by not earning them.[3]

The true poem is not that which the public read. There is always a poem not printed on paper, coincident with the production of this, which is stereotyped in the poet's life, is what he has become through his work. Some symbol of value may shape itself to the senses in wood, or marble, or verse, but this is fluctuating as the laborer's hire, which may or may not be withheld. His very material is not material but supernatural. Perhaps the hugest and most effective deed may have no sensible result at all on earth, but paint itself in the heavens in new stars and constellations. Its very material lies out of nature. When, in rare moments, we strive wholly with one consent, which we call a yearning, we may not hope that our work will stand in any artist's gallery.[4]

[1] [*The Service*, p. 23.]
[2] [*The Service*, p. 23.]
[3] [*The Service*, p. 23.]
[4] [*The Service*, p. 23.]

Let not the artist expect that his true work will stand in any prince's gallery.

July 2. I am not taken up, like Moses, upon a mountain to learn the law, but lifted up in my seat here, in the warm sunshine and genial light.

They who are ready to go are already invited.

Neither men nor things have any true mode of invitation but to be inviting.

Can that be a task which all things abet, and to postpone which is to strive against nature? [1]

July 3. When Alexander appears, the Hercynian and Dodonean woods seem to wave a welcome to him.

Do not thoughts and men's lives enrich the earth and change the aspect of things as much as a new growth of wood?

What are Godfrey and Gonsalvo unless we breathe a life into them, and reënact their exploits as a prelude to our own? The past is only so heroic as we see it; it is the canvas on which our conception of heroism is painted, the dim prospectus of our future field. We are dreaming of what we are to do.[2]

The last sunrise I witnessed seemed to outshine the

[1] [*The Service*, p. 23.] [2] [*The Service*, pp. 25, 26.]

splendor of all preceding ones, and I was convinced that it behooved man to dawn as freshly, and with equal promise and steadiness advance into the career of life, with as lofty and serene a countenance to move onward through his midday to a yet fairer and more promising setting. Has the day grown old when it sets? and shall man wear out sooner than the sun? In the crimson colors of the west I discern the budding hues of dawn. To my western brother it is rising pure and bright as it did to me, but the evening exhibits in the still rear of day the beauty which through morning and noon escaped me.[1] When we are oppressed by the heat and turmoil of the noon, let us remember that the sun which scorches us with brazen beams is gilding the hills of morning and awaking the woodland quires for other men.

We will have a dawn, and noon, and serene sunset in ourselves.

What we call the gross atmosphere of evening is the accumulated deed of the day, which absorbs the rays of beauty, and shows more richly than the naked promise of the dawn. By earnest toil in the heat of the noon, let us get ready a rich western blaze against the evening of our lives.[2]

Low-thoughted, plodding men have come and camped in my neighbor's field to-night, with camp music and bustle. Their bugle instantly finds a sounding board in the heavens, though mean lips blow it. The sky is delighted with strains which the connois-

[1] [*The Service*, pp. 21, 22.] [2] [*The Service*, p. 22.]

seur rejects. It seems to say, Now is this my own earth.[1]

In music are the centripetal and centrifugal forces. The universe needed only to hear a divine harmony that every star might fall into its proper place and assume a true sphericity.[2]

July 4. 4 o'clock, A. M. The Townsend Light Infantry encamped last night in my neighbor's inclosure.

The night still breathes slumberously over field and wood, when a few soldiers gather about one tent in the twilight, and their band plays an old Scotch air, with bugle and drum and fife attempered to the season. It seems like the morning hymn of creation. The first sounds of the awakening camp, mingled with the chastened strains which so sweetly salute the dawn, impress me as the morning prayer of an army.[3]

And now the morning gun fires. The soldier awakening to creation and awakening it. I am sure none are cowards now. These strains are the roving dreams which steal from tent to tent, and break forth into distinct melody. They are the soldier's morning thought. Each man awakes himself with lofty emotions, and would do some heroic deed. You need preach no homily to him; he is the stuff they are made of.

[1] [*The Service*, p. 14.] [2] [*The Service*, p. 12.]

[3] I have heard a strain of music issuing from a soldiers' camp in the dawn, which sounded like the morning hymn of creation. The birches rustling in the breeze and the slumberous breathing of the crickets seemed to hush their murmuring to attend to it. [Written in pencil on a fly-leaf of the Journal.]

The whole course of our lives should be analogous to one day of the soldier's. His Genius seems to whisper in his ear what demeanor is befitting, and in his bravery and his march he yields a blind and partial obedience.

The fresher breeze which accompanies the dawn rustles the oaks and birches, and the earth respires calmly with the creaking of crickets. Some hazel leaf stirs gently, as if anxious not to awake the day too abruptly, while the time is hastening to the distinct line between darkness and light. And soldiers issue from their dewy tents, and as if in answer to expectant nature, sing a sweet and far-echoing hymn.

We may well neglect many things, provided we overlook them.

When to-day I saw the "Great Ball" rolled majestically along, it seemed a shame that man could not move like it. All dignity and grandeur has something of the undulatoriness of the sphere. It is the secret of majesty in the rolling gait of the elephant, and of all grace in action and in art. The line of beauty is a curve. Each man seems striving to imitate its gait, and keep pace with it, but it moves on regardless and conquers the multitude with its majesty. What shame that our lives, which should be the source of planetary motion and sanction the order of the spheres, are full of abruptness and angularity, so as not to roll, nor move majestically.[1]

[1] [*The Service*, p. 7. Mr. Sanborn, in a note to this passage, says, "The allusion here is to the extraordinary sight of the gravest citizens

July 5. Go where we will, we discover infinite change in particulars only, not in generals.

You cannot rob a man of anything which he will miss.

July 6. All this worldly wisdom was once the unamiable heresy of some wise man.[1]

I observe a truly wise practice on every hand, in education, in religion, and the morals of society, — enough embodied wisdom to have set up many an ancient philosopher.[2]

This society, if it were a person to be met face to face, would not only be tolerated but courted, with its so impressive experience and admirable acquaintance with things.

Consider society at any epoch, and who does not see that heresy has already *prevailed* in it? [3]

Have no mean hours, but be grateful for every hour, and accept what it brings. The reality will make any sincere record respectable. No day will have been wholly misspent, if one sincere, thoughtful page has been written.

of Concord, in that summer [1840], . . . turning out to roll a huge ball, emblematic of the popular movement against President Van Buren, from the battle-ground of Concord to that of Bunker Hill, singing as they rolled:—

'It is the Ball a-rolling on
For Tippecanoe and Tyler too.'"

[1] [*Week*, p. 129; Riv. 161.] [2] [*Week*, p. 129; Riv. 160, 161.]
[3] [*Week*, p. 129; Riv. 161.]

Let the daily tide leave some deposit on these pages, as it leaves sand and shells on the shore. So much increase of *terra firma*. This may be a calendar of the ebbs and flows of the soul; and on these sheets as a beach, the waves may cast up pearls and seaweed.

July 7. I have experienced such simple joy in the trivial matters of fishing and sporting, formerly, as might inspire the muse of Homer and Shakespeare. And now, when I turn over the pages and ponder the plates of the "Angler's Souvenir," I exclaim with the poet, —

> "Can such things be,
> And overcome us like a summer's cloud?" [1]

When I hear a sudden burst from a horn, I am startled, as if one had provoked such wildness as he could not rule nor tame. He dares to wake the echoes which he cannot put to rest.[2]

July 8. Doubt and falsehood are yet good preachers. They affirm roundly, while they deny partially.

I am pleased to learn that Thales was up and stirring by night not unfrequently, as his astronomical discoveries prove.

It was a saying of Solon that "it is necessary to observe a medium in all things."

The golden mean, in ethics as in physics, is the centre of the system, and that about which all revolve; and

[1] [*Excursions*, p. 119; Riv. 146.] [2] [*The Service*, p. 13.]

though, to a distant and plodding planet, it is the uttermost extreme, yet, when that planet's year is complete, it will be found central.[1] They who are alarmed lest virtue run into extreme good, have not yet wholly embraced her, but described only a slight arc about her, and from so small a curvature you can calculate no centre whatever; but their mean is no better than meanness, nor their medium than mediocrity.

The brave man, while he observes strictly this golden mean, seems to run through all extremes with impunity; like the sun, which now appears in the zenith, now in the horizon, and again is faintly reflected from the moon's disk, and has the credit of describing an entire great circle, crossing the equinoctial and solstitial colures, without detriment to his steadfastness or mediocrity.[2]

Every planet asserts its own to be the centre of the system.

Only *meanness* is mediocre, *moderate;* but the true *medium* is not contained within any *bounds*, but is as wide as the ends it connects.

When Solon endeavored to prove that Salamis had formerly belonged to the Athenians and not to the Megarians, he caused the tombs to be opened, and showed that the inhabitants of Salamis turned the faces of their dead to the same side with the Athenians, but the Megarians to the opposite side.[3]

[1] [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, p. 277; *Misc.*, Riv. 36.]
[2] [*The Service*, pp. 3, 4.] [3] [*Week*, p. 265; Riv. 329.]

So does each part bear witness to all, and the history of all the past may be read in a single grain of its ashes.

July 9. In most men's religion the ligature which should be its muscle and sinew is rather like that thread which the accomplices of Cylon held in their hands, when they went abroad from the temple of Minerva, the other end being attached to the statue of the goddess. But frequently, as in their case, the thread breaks, being stretched, and they are left without an asylum.[1]

The value of many traits in Grecian history depends not so much on their importance as history, as [on] the readiness with which they accept a wide interpretation, and illustrate the poetry and ethics of mankind. When they announce no particular truth, they are yet central to all truth. They are like those examples by which we improve, but of which we never formally extract the moral. Even the isolated and unexplained facts are like the ruins of the temples which in imagination we restore, and ascribe to some Phidias, or other master.

The Greeks were boys in the sunshine, the Romans were men in the field, the Persians women in the house, the Egyptians old men in the dark.

He who receives an injury is an accomplice of the wrong-doer.

July 10. To myself I am as pliant as osier, and my

[1] [*Week*, p. 79; Riv. 99. *The Service*, p. 5.]

courses seem not so easy to be calculated as Encke's comet; but I am powerless to bend the character of another; he is like iron in my hands. I could tame a hyena more easily than my friend. I contemplate him as a granite boulder. He is material which no tool of mine will work. A naked savage will fell an oak with a firebrand, and wear a hatchet out of the rock, but I cannot hew the smallest chip out of my fellow. There is a character in every one which no art can reach to beautify or deform.[1]

Nothing was ever so unfamiliar and startling to me as my own thoughts.

We know men through their eyes. You might say that the eye was always original and unlike another. It is the feature of the individual, and not of the family, — in twins still different. All a man's privacy is in his eye, and its expression he cannot alter more than he can alter his character. So long as we look a man in the eye, it seems to rule the other features, and make them, too, original. When I have mistaken one person for another, observing only his form, and carriage, and inferior features, the unlikeness seemed of the least consequence; but when I caught his eye, and my doubts were removed, it seemed to pervade every feature.

The eye revolves on an independent pivot which we can no more control than our own will. Its axle is the axle of the soul, as the axis of the earth is coincident with the axis of the heavens.

[1] [*Week*, p. 301; Riv. 374.]

July 11. The true art is not merely a sublime consolation and holiday labor which the gods have given to sickly mortals, to be wrought at in parlors, and not in stithies amid soot and smoke, but such a masterpiece as you may imagine a dweller on the table-lands of Central Asia might produce, with threescore and ten years for canvas, and the faculties of a man for tools, — a human life, wherein you might hope to discover more than the freshness of Guido's Aurora, or the mild light of Titian's landscapes; not a bald imitation or rival of Nature, but the restored original of which she is the reflection. For such a work as this, whole galleries of Greece and Italy are a mere mixing of colors and preparatory quarrying of marble.[1]

Not how is the idea expressed in stone or on canvas, is the question, but how far it has obtained form and expression in the life of the artist.

There is much covert truth in the old mythology which makes Vulcan a brawny and deformed smith, who sweat more than the other gods. His stithy was not like a modern studio.

Let us not wait any longer, but step down from the mountains on to the plain of earth. Let our delay be like the sun's, when he lingers on the dividing line of day and night a brief space when the world is grateful for his light. We will make such haste as the morning and such delay as the evening.[2]

It concerns us rather to be something here present than to leave something behind us.[3]

[1] [*The Service*, p. 24.] [2] [*The Service*, p. 26.] [3] [*The Service*, p. 23.]

It is the man determines what is said, not the words. If a mean person uses a wise maxim, I bethink me how it can be interpreted so as to commend itself to his meanness; but if a wise man makes a commonplace remark, I consider what wider construction it will admit. When Pittacus says, "It is necessary to accommodate one's self to the time and take advantage of the occasion," I assent. He might have considered that to accommodate one's self to all times, and take advantage of all occasions, was really to be independent, and make our own opportunity.

July 12. What first suggested that necessity was grim, and made fate so fatal? The strongest is always the least violent. Necessity is a sort of Eastern cushion on which I recline. I contemplate its mild, inflexible countenance, as the haze in October days. When I am vexed I only ask to be left alone with it. Leave me to my fate. It is the bosom of time and the lap of eternity; since to be necessary is to be needful, it is only another name for inflexibility of good. How I welcome my grim fellow and aspire to be such a necessity as he! He is so flexible, and yields to me as the air to my body! I leap and dance in his midst, and play with his beard till he smiles. I greet thee, my elder brother, who with thy touch ennoblest all things. Must it be so, then is it good. Thou commendest even petty ills by thy countenance.

Over Greece hangs the divine necessity, ever a mellower heaven of itself, whose light too gilds the Acropolis and a thousand fanes and groves.[1]

[1] [*The Service*, p. 10.]

Pittacus said there was no better course than to endeavor to do well what you are doing at any moment.

Go where he will, the wise man is proprietor of all things. Everything bears a similar inscription, if we could but read it, to that on the vase found in the stomach of a fish in old times, — "To the most wise."

When his impious fellow-passengers invoked the gods in a storm, Bias cried, "Hist! hist! lest the gods perceive that you are here, for we should all be lost."

A wise man will always have his duds picked up, and be ready for whatever may happen, as the prudent merchant, notwithstanding the lavish display of his wares, will yet have them packed or easy to be removed in emergencies. In this sense there is something sluttish in all finery. When I see a fine lady or gentleman dressed to the top of the fashion, I wonder what they would do if an earthquake should happen, or a fire suddenly break out, for they seem to have counted only on fair weather, and that things will go on smoothly and without jostling. Those curls and jewels, so nicely adjusted, expect an unusual deference from the elements.

Our dress should be such as will hang conveniently about us, and fit equally well in good and in bad fortune; such as will approve itself of the right fashion and fabric, whether for the cotillion or the earthquake. In the sack of Priene, when the inhabitants with much hurry and bustle were carrying their effects to a place

of safety, some one asked Bias, who remained tranquil amid the confusion, why he was not thinking how he should save something, as the others were. "I do so," said Bias, "for I carry all my effects with me."

July 14. Our discourse should be *ex tempore*, but not *pro tempore*.

July 16. We are as much refreshed by sounds as by sights, or scents, or flavors, — as the barking of a dog heard in the woods at midnight, or the tinklings which attend the dawn.

As I picked blackberries this morning, by starlight, the distant yelping of a dog fell on my inward ear, as the cool breeze on my cheek.

July 19. These two days that I have not written in my Journal, set down in the calendar as the 17th and 18th of July, have been really an æon in which a Syrian empire might rise and fall. How many Persias have been lost and won in the interim? Night is spangled with fresh stars.

July 26. When I consider how, after sunset, the stars come out gradually in troops from behind the hills and woods, I confess that I could not have contrived a more curious and inspiring night.

July 27. Some men, like some buildings, are bulky but not great. The Pyramids any traveller may measure with his line, but the dimensions of the Parthenon

in feet and inches will seem to dangle from its entablature like an elastic drapery.[1]

Much credit is due to a brave man's eye. It is the focus in which all rays are collected. It sees from within, or from the centre, just as we scan the whole concave of the heavens at a glance, but can compass only one side of the pebble at our feet.[2]

The grandeur of these stupendous masses of clouds, tossed into such irregular greatness across the sky, seems thrown away on the meanness of my employment. The drapery seems altogether too rich for such poor acting.[3]

In vain the sun challenges man to equal greatness in his career. We look in vain over earth for a Roman greatness to answer the eternal provocation.[4]

We look up to the gilded battlements of the eternal city, and are contented to be suburban dwellers outside the walls.[5]

By the last breath of the May air I inhale I am reminded that the ages never got so far down as this before. The wood thrush is a more modern philosopher than Plato and Aristotle. They are now a dogma, but he preaches the doctrine of this hour.

[1] [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, p. 277; *Misc.*, Riv. 36. *The Service*, p. 3.]

[2] [*The Service*, p. 3.]

[3] [*Week*, p. 407; Riv. 502. *The Service*, p. 17.]

[4] [*The Service*, p. 17.]

[5] [*Week*, p. 407; Riv. 502. *The Service*, p. 17.]

This systole-diastole of the heart, the circulation of the blood from the centre to the extremities, the chylification which is constantly going on in our bodies are a sort of military evolution, a struggle to outgeneral the decay of time by the skillfulest tactics.

When bravery is worsted, it joins the peace society.

A word is wiser than any man, than any series of words. In its present received sense it may be false, but in its inner sense by descent and analogy it approves itself. Language is the most perfect work of art in the world. The chisel of a thousand years retouches it.

Nature refuses to sympathize with our sorrow. She seems not to have provided for, but by a thousand contrivances against, it. She has bevelled the margins of the eyelids that the tears may not overflow on the cheek.[1]

We can conceive of a Bravery so wide that nothing can meet to befall it, so omnipresent that nothing can lie in wait for it, so permanent that no obstinacy can reduce it. The stars are its silent sentries by night, and the sun its pioneer by day. From its abundant cheerfulness spring flowers and the rainbow, and its infinite humor and wantonness produce corn and vines.[2]

[1] [*The Service*, p. 9.]

[2] [The last two sentences appear also in pencil on a fly-leaf, preceded by, "It sleeps securely within its camp, not even dreaming of a foe."]

V

1841

(ÆT. 23–24)

Jan. 23. A day is lapsing. I hear cockerels crowing in the yard, and see them stalking among the chips in the sun. I hear busy feet on the floors, and the whole house jars with industry. Surely the day is well spent, and the time is full to overflowing. Mankind is as busy as the flowers in summer, which make haste to unfold themselves in the forenoon, and close their petals in the afternoon.

The momentous topics of human life are always of secondary importance to the business in hand, just as carpenters discuss politics between the strokes of the hammer while they are shingling a roof.[1]

The squeaking of the pump sounds as necessary as the music of the spheres.

The solidity and apparent necessity of this routine insensibly recommend it to me. It is like a cane or a cushion for the infirm, and in view of it all are infirm. If there were but one erect and solid-standing tree in the woods, all creatures would go to rub against it and make sure of their footing. Routine is a ground to stand on, a wall to retreat to; we cannot draw on our boots without bracing ourselves against it.[2] It is the fence over which neighbors lean when they talk. All this

[1] [*Week*, p. 230; Riv. 285.] [2] [*Week*, p. 229; Riv. 284, 285.]

cockcrowing, and hawing and geeing, and business in the streets, is like the spring-board on which tumblers perform and develop their elasticity. Our health requires that we should recline on it from time to time. When we are in it, the hand stands still on the face of the clock, and we grow like corn in the genial dankness and silence of the night.[1] Our weakness wants it, but our strength uses it. Good for the body is the work of the body, good for the soul the work of the soul, and good for either the work of the other. Let them not call hard names, nor know a divided interest.

When I detect a beauty in any of the recesses of nature, I am reminded, by the serene and retired spirit in which it requires to be contemplated, of the inexpressible privacy of a life, — how silent and unambitious it is. The beauty there is in mosses will have to be considered from the holiest, quietest nook.[2]

The gods delight in stillness; they say, 'St — 'st. My truest, serenest moments are too still for emotion; they have woollen feet. In all our lives we live under the hill, and if we are not gone we live there still.

Jan. 24. Sunday. I almost shrink from the arduousness of meeting men erectly day by day.

Be resolutely and faithfully what you are; be humbly what you aspire to be. Be sure you give men the best of your wares, though they be poor enough, and the gods will help you to lay up a better store for the future.

[1] [*Week*, p. 229; Riv. 285. See also p. 124 of this volume.]

[2] [*Excursions*, p. 106; Riv. 131.]

Man's noblest gift to man is his sincerity, for it embraces his integrity also. Let him not dole out of himself anxiously, to suit their weaker or stronger stomachs, but make a clean gift of himself, and empty his coffers at once. I would be in society as in the landscape; in the presence of nature there is no reserve, nor effrontery.

Coleridge says of the "*ideas* spoken out everywhere in the Old and New Testament," that they "resemble the fixed stars, which appear of the same size to the naked as to the armed eye; the magnitude of which the telescope may rather seem to diminish than to increase."

It is more proper for a spiritual fact to have suggested an analogous natural one, than for the natural fact to have preceded the spiritual in our minds.

By spells seriousness will be forced to cut capers, and drink a deep and refreshing draught of silliness; to turn this sedate day of Lucifer's and Apollo's, into an all fools' day for Harlequin and Cornwallis. The sun does not grudge his rays to either, but they are alike patronized by the gods. Like overtasked schoolboys, all my members and nerves and sinews petition Thought for a recess, and my very thigh-bones itch to slip away from under me, and run and join the mêlée. I exult in stark inanity, leering on nature and the soul. We think the gods reveal themselves only to sedate and musing gentlemen. But not so; the buffoon in the midst of his antics catches unobserved glimpses, which he treasures for the lonely hour. When I have been playing tom-

fool, I have been driven to exchange the old for a more liberal and catholic philosophy.

Jan. 25. Monday. To-day I feel the migratory instinct strong in me, and all my members and humors anticipate the breaking up of winter. If I yielded to this impulse, it would surely guide me to summer haunts. This indefinite restlessness and fluttering on the perch do, no doubt, prophesy the final migration of souls out of nature to a serene summer, in long harrows and waving lines [1] in the spring weather, over what fair uplands and fertile Elysian meadows winging their way at evening and seeking a resting-place with loud cackling and uproar!

Wealth, no less than knowledge, is power. Among the Bedouins the richest man is the sheik, among savages he who has most iron and wampum is chief, and in England and America he is the merchant prince.

We should strengthen, and beautify, and industriously mould our bodies to be fit companions of the soul, — assist them to grow up like trees, and be agreeable and wholesome objects in nature. I think if I had had the disposal of this soul of man, I should have bestowed it sooner on some antelope of the plains than upon this sickly and sluggish body.

Jan. 26. Tuesday. I have as much property as I can command and use. If by a fault in my character I do

[1] [See *Excursions*, p. 110; Riv. 135.]

not derive my just revenues, there is virtually a mortgage on my inheritance. A man's wealth is never entered in the registrar's office. Wealth does not come in along the great thoroughfares, it does not float on the Erie or Pennsylvania canal, but is imported by a solitary track without bustle or competition, from a brave industry to a quiet mind.

I had a dream last night which had reference to an act in my life in which I had been most disinterested and true to my highest instinct but completely failed in realizing my hopes; and now, after so many months, in the stillness of sleep, complete justice was rendered me. It was a divine remuneration. In my waking hours I could not have conceived of such retribution; the presumption of desert would have damned the whole. But now I was permitted to be not so much a subject as a partner to that retribution. It was the award of divine justice, which will at length be and is even now accomplished.[1]

Good writing as well as good acting will be obedience to conscience. There must not be a particle of will or whim mixed with it. If we can listen, we shall hear. By reverently listening to the inner voice, we may reinstate ourselves on the pinnacle of humanity.

Jan. 27. *Wednesday.* In the compensation of the dream, there was no implied loss to any, but immeasurable advantage to all.[2]

[1] [*Week*, p. 315 ; Riv. 390, 391. See also below.] [2] [See above.]

The punishment of sin is not positive, as is the reward of virtue.

For a flower, I like the name pansy, or *pensée*, best of any.

Jan. 28. No innocence can quite stand up under suspicion, if it is conscious of being suspected. In the company of one who puts a wrong construction upon your actions, they are apt really to deserve a mean construction. While in that society I can never retrieve myself. Attribute to me a great motive, and I shall not fail to have one; but a mean one, and the fountain of virtue will be poisoned by the suspicion. Show men unlimited faith as the coin with which you will deal with them, and they will invariably exhibit the best wares they have. I would meet men as the friends of all their virtue, and the foes of all their vice, for no man is the partner of his guilt. If you suspect me you will never see me, but all our intercourse will be the politest leave-taking; I shall constantly defer and apologize, and postpone myself in your presence. The self-defender is accursed in the sight of gods and men; he is a superfluous knight, who serves no lady in the land. He will find in the end that he has been fighting windmills, and battered his mace to no purpose. The injured man with querulous tone resisting his fate is like a tree struck by lightning, which rustles its sere leaves the winter through, not having vigor enough [to] cast them off.

As for apologies, I must be off with the dew and the

frost, and leave mankind to repair the damage with their gauze screens and straw.

Resistance is a very wholesome and delicious morsel at times. When Venus advanced against the Greeks with resistless valor, it was by far the most natural attitude into which the poet could throw his hero to make him resist heroically. To a devil one might yield gracefully, but a god would be a worthy foe, and would pardon the affront.

It would be worth while, once for all, fairly and cleanly to tell how we are to be used, as vendors of lucifer matches send directions in the envelope, both how light may be readily procured and no accident happen to the user.

Let your mood determine the form of salutation, and approach the creature with a natural nonchalance, as though he were anything but what he is, and you were anything but what you are, — as though he were he, and you were you; in short, as though he were so insignificant that it did not signify, and so important that it did not import. Depend upon it, the timber is well seasoned and tough, and will bear rough usage; and if it should crack, there is plenty more where it came from. I am no piece of china-ware that cannot be jostled against my neighbor, without danger of rupture from the collision, and must needs ring a scrannel strain to the end of my days when once I am cracked; but rather one of the old-fashioned wooden trenchers, which one

while stands at the head of the table, and at another is a milking-stool, and at another a seat for children, and finally goes down to its grave not unadorned with honorable scars, and does not die till it is *worn* out. Use me, for I am useful in my way. I stand as one of many petitioners, from toadstool and henbane up to dahlia and violet, supplicating to be put to my use, if by any means ye may find me serviceable; whether for a medicated drink or bath, as balm and lavender; or for fragrance, as verbena and geranium; or for sight, as cactus; or for thoughts, as pansy.[1]

Jan. 29. There is something proudly thrilling in the thought that this obedience to conscience and trust in God, which is so solemnly preached in extremities and arduous circumstances, is only to retreat to one's self, and rely on our own strength. In trivial circumstances I find myself sufficient to myself, and in the most momentous I have no ally but myself, and must silently put by their harm by my own strength, as I did the former. As my own hand bent aside the willow in my path, so must my single arm put to flight the devil and his angels. God is not our ally when we shrink, and neuter when we are bold. If by trusting in God you lose any particle of your vigor, trust in Him no longer. When you trust, do not lay aside your armor, but put it on and buckle it tighter. If by reliance on the gods I have disbanded one of my forces, then was it poor policy. I had better have retained the most inexperienced tyro who had straggled into the camp, and let go

[1] [*Week*, p. 304; Riv. 377, 378. See also p. 205.]

the heavenly alliance. I cannot afford to relax discipline because God is on my side, for He is on the side of discipline. And if the gods were only the heavens I fought under, I would not care if they stormed or were calm. I do not want a countenance, but a help. And there is more of God and divine help in a man's little finger than in idle prayer and trust.

The best and bravest deed is that which the whole man — heart, lungs, hands, fingers, and toes — at any time prompts. Each hanger-on in the purlieus of the camp, must strike his standard at the signal from the Prætorian tent, and fall into the line of march; but if a single sutler delay to make up his pack, then suspect the fates and consult the omens again. This is the meaning of integrity; this is to be an integer, and not a fraction. Be even for all virtuous ends, but odd for all vice. Be a perfect power, so that any of your roots multiplied into itself may give the whole again.

Beauty is compared, not measured, for it is the creature of proportions, not of size. Size must be subdued to it. It is hard for a tall or a short person to be beautiful.

To graft the Persian lilac on the ash, is as if you were to splice the thigh-bones of the Venus de Medici.

Friends will have to be introduced each time they meet. They will be eternally strange to one another, and when they have mutually appropriated their value for the last hour, they will go and gather a new measure

of strangeness for the next. They are like two boughs crossed in the wood, which play backwards and forwards upon one another in the wind, and only wear into each other, but never the sap of the one flows into the pores of the other, for then the wind would no more draw from them those strains which enchanted the wood. They are not two united, but rather one divided.

Of all strange and unaccountable things this journalizing is the strangest. It will allow nothing to be predicated of it; its good is not good, nor its bad bad. If I make a huge effort to expose my innermost and richest wares to light, my counter seems cluttered with the meanest homemade stuffs; but after months or years I may discover the wealth of India, and whatever rarity is brought overland from Cathay, in that confused heap, and what perhaps seemed a festoon of dried apple or pumpkin will prove a string of Brazilian diamonds, or pearls from Coromandel.

Men lie behind the barrier of a relation as effectually concealed as the landscape by a mist; and when at length some unforeseen accident throws me into a new attitude to them, I am astounded, as if for the first time I saw the sun on the hillside. They lie out before me like a new order of things. As, when the master meets his pupil as a man, then first do we stand under the same heavens, and master and pupil alike go down the resistless ocean stream together.

Jan. 30. *Saturday.* Far over the fields, between the

tops of yonder wood, I see a slight cloud not larger than the vapor from a kettle, drifting by its own inward purpose in a direction contrary to the planet. As it flits across the dells and defiles of the tree-tops, now seen, then lost beyond a pine, I am curious to know wherein its will resides, for to my eye it has no heart, nor lungs, nor brain, nor any interior and private chamber which it may inhabit.

Its motion reminds me of those lines of Milton:—

> "As when far off at sea a fleet descried
> Hangs in the clouds, by equinoctial winds
> Close sailing from Bengala, or the isles
> Of Ternate and Tidore, whence merchants bring
> Their spicy drugs; they on the trading flood,
> Ply stemming nightly toward the pole."

The snow collects upon the plumes of the pitch pine in the form of a pineapple, which if you divide in the middle will expose three red kernels like the tamarind-stone. So does winter with his mock harvest jeer at the sincerity of summer. The tropical fruits, which will not bear the rawness of our summer, are imitated in a thousand fantastic shapes by the whimsical genius of winter.

In winter the warmth comes directly from the sun, and is not radiated from the earth. In summer I forget to bless the sun for his heat; but when I feel his beams on my back as I thread some snowy dale, I am grateful as for a special kindness which would not be weary of well doing but had pursued me even into that by-place.

When the wind blows, the fine snow comes filtering down through all the aisles of the wood in a golden cloud.

The trees covered with snow admit a very plain and clean light, but not brilliant, as if through windows of ground glass; a sort of white darkness it is, all of the sun's splendor that can be retained.

The fashions of the wood are more fluctuating than those of Paris; snow, rime, ice, green and dry leaves incessantly make new patterns. There are all the shapes and hues of the kaleidoscope and the designs and ciphers of books of heraldry in the outlines of the trees. Every time I see a nodding pine-top, it seems as if a new fashion of wearing plumes had come into vogue.

I saw a team come out of a path in the woods, as though it had never gone in, but belonged there, and only came out like Elisha's bears. It was wholly of the village, and not at all of the wood.

These particles of snow which the early wind shakes down are what is stirring, or the morning news of the wood. Sometimes it is blown up above the trees, like the sand of the desert.

You glance up these paths, closely imbowered by bent trees, as through the side aisles of a cathedral, and expect to hear a choir chanting from their depths. You are never so far in them as they are far before you.

Their secret is where you are not and where your feet can never carry you.

I tread in the tracks of the fox which has gone before me by some hours, or which perhaps I have started, with such a tiptoe of expectation as if I were on the trail of the Spirit itself which resides in these woods, and expected soon to catch it in its lair.[1]

The snow falls on no two trees alike, but the forms it assumes are as various as those of the twigs and leaves which receive it. They are, as it were, predetermined by the genius of the tree. So one divine spirit descends alike on all, but bears a peculiar fruit in each. The divinity subsides on all men, as the snowflakes settle on the fields and ledges and takes the form of the various clefts and surfaces on which it lodges.

Here is the distinct trail of a fox stretching [a] quarter of a mile across the pond. Now I am curious to know what has determined its graceful curvatures, its greater or less spaces and distinctness, and how surely they were coincident with the fluctuations of some mind, why they now lead me two steps to the right, and then three to the left. If these things are not to be called up and accounted for in the Lamb's Book of Life, I shall set them down for careless accountants. Here was one expression of the divine mind this morning. The pond was his journal, and last night's snow made a *tabula rasa* for him. I know which way a mind wended this

[1] [*Excursions*, p. 117; Riv. 144.]

morning, what horizon it faced, by the setting of these tracks; whether it moved slowly or rapidly, by the greater or less intervals and distinctness, for the swiftest step leaves yet a lasting trace.[1]

Sometimes I come out suddenly upon a high plain, which seems to be the upper level and true surface of the earth, and by its very baldness aspires and lies up nearer to the stars, — a place where a decalogue might be let down or a saint translated.

I take a horse and oxen, standing among the wood-piles in the forest, for one of them, and when at length the horse pricks his ears, and I give him another name, where's the difference? I am startled by the possibility of such errors, and the indifference with [which] they are allowed to occur.

Fair Haven Pond is *scored* with the trails of foxes, and you may see where they have gambolled and gone through a hundred evolutions, which testify to a singular listlessness and leisure in nature.

Suddenly, looking down the river, I saw a fox some sixty rods off, making across to the hills on my left. As the snow lay five inches deep, he made but slow progress, but it was no impediment to me. So, yielding to the instinct of the chase, I tossed my head aloft and bounded away, snuffing the air like a fox-hound, and spurning the world and the Humane Society at each bound. It seemed the woods rang with the hunter's

[1] [*Excursions*, p. 117; Riv. 144.]

horn, and Diana and all the satyrs joined in the chase and cheered me on. Olympian and Elean youths were waving palms on the hills. In the meanwhile I gained rapidly on the fox; but he showed a remarkable presence of mind, for, instead of keeping up the face of the hill, which was steep and unwooded in that part, he kept along the slope in the direction of the forest, though he lost ground by it. Notwithstanding his fright, he took no step which was not beautiful. The course on his part was a series of most graceful curves. It was a sort of leopard canter, I should say, as if he were nowise impeded by the snow, but were husbanding his strength all the while. When he doubled I wheeled and cut him off, bounding with fresh vigor, and Antæus-like, recovering my strength each time I touched the snow. Having got near enough for a fair view, just as he was slipping into the wood, I gracefully yielded him the palm. He ran as though there were not a bone in his back, occasionally dropping his muzzle to the snow for a rod or two, and then tossing his head aloft when satisfied of his course. When he came to a declivity he put his fore feet together and slid down it like a cat. He trod so softly that you could not have heard it from any nearness, and yet with such expression that it would not have been quite inaudible at any distance. So, hoping this experience would prove a useful lesson to him, I returned to the village by the highway of the river.[1]

There is all the romance of my youthfulest moment in music. Heaven lies about us, as in our infancy. There

[1] [*Excursions*, pp. 117, 118; Riv. 144, 145.]

is nothing so wild and extravagant that it does not make true. It makes a dream my only real experience, and prompts faith to such elasticity that only the incredible can satisfy it. It tells me again to trust the remotest and finest, as the divinest, instinct. All that I have imagined of heroism, it reminds and reassures me of. It is a life unlived, a life beyond life, where at length my years will pass. I look under the lids of Time.

Jan. 31. *Sunday.* At each step man measures himself against the system. If he cannot actually belay the sun and make it fast to this planet, yet the British man alone spins a yarn in one year which will reach fifty-one times the distance from the earth to the sun. So, having his cable ready twisted and coiled, the fixed stars are virtually within his grasp. He carries his lasso coiled at his saddle bow, but is never forced to cast it.

All things are subdued to me by virtue of that coiled lasso I carry, and I lead them without the trouble of a cast. It is the rope that lies coiled on the deck, which moors my ship, and I have never to bend a cable.

In God's hall hang cables of infinite length, and in His entries stand bars of infinite strength; but those cables were never bent, nor those bars ever poised, for all things have been subdued to the divinity from the first, and these are the seals of His power.

The guilty never escape, for a steed stands ever ready saddled and bridled at God's door, and the sinner surrenders at last.

End of my Journal of 396 *pages.*

Feb. 2. *Tuesday.* It is easy to repeat, but hard to originate. Nature is readily made to repeat herself in a thousand forms, and in the daguerreotype her own light is amanuensis, and the picture too has more than a surface significance, — a depth equal to the prospect, — so that the microscope may be applied to the one as the spy-glass to the other. Thus we may easily multiply the forms of the outward; but to give the within outwardness, that is not easy.

That an impression may be taken, perfect stillness, though but for an instant, is necessary. There is something analogous in the birth of all rhymes.

Our sympathy is a gift whose value we can never know, nor when we impart it. The instant of communion is when, for the least point of time, we cease to oscillate, and coincide in rest by as fine a point as a star pierces the firmament.

The stars are the mountain peaks of celestial countries.

A child asked its father what became of the old moon, and he said it was cut up into stars.

There is always a single ear in the audience, to which we address ourselves.

How much does it concern you, the good opinion of your friend? Therein is the measure of fame. For the herd of men multiplied many times will never come up to the value of one friend. In this society there is no

fame but love; for as our name may be on the lips of men, so are we in each other's hearts. There is no ambition but virtue; for why should we go round about, who may go direct?

All those contingences which the philanthropist, statesman, and housekeeper write so many books to meet are simply and quietly settled in the intercourse of friends.

For our aspirations there is no expression as yet, but if we obey steadily, by another year we shall have learned the language of last year's aspirations.

When I read the other day the weight of some of the generals of the Revolution, it seemed no unimportant fact in their biography. It is at least one other means of comparing ourselves with them. Tell me how much Milton or Shakespeare weighed, and I will get weighed myself, that I may know better what they are to me.

Weight has something very imposing in it, for we cannot get rid of it. Once in the scales we must weigh. And are we not always in the scales, and weighing just our due, though we kick the beam, and do all we can to heavy or lighten ourselves?

Feb. 3. *Wednesday.* The present seems never to get its due; it is the least obvious, — neither before, nor behind, but within us. All the past plays into this moment, and we are what we are. My aspiration is one thing, my reflection another, but, over all, myself and condition is and does. To men and nature I am each

moment a finished tool, — a spade, a barrow, or a pick-axe. This immense promise is no *efficient* quality. For all practical purposes I am done.

When we do a service to our neighbor, we serve our next neighbor.

We are constantly invited to be what we are; as to something worthy and noble. I never waited but for myself to come round; none ever detained me, but I lagged or tagged after myself.

It steads us to be as true to children and boors as to God himself. It is the only attitude which will suit all occasions; it only will make the earth yield her increase, and by it do we effectually expostulate with the wind. If I run against a post, this is the remedy. I would meet the morning and evening on very sincere ground. When the sun introduces me to a new day, I silently say to myself, "Let us be faithful all round; we will do justice and receive it." Something like this is the secret charm of Nature's demeanor toward us, strict conscientiousness [?] and disregard of us when we have ceased to have regard for ourselves. So she can never offend us. How true she is! — and never swerves. In her most genial moment her laws are as steadfastly and relentlessly fulfilled — though the decalogue is rhymed and set to sweetest music — as in her sternest.

Any exhibition of affection — as an inadvertent word, or act, or look — seems premature, as if the time

were not ripe for it; like the buds which the warm days near the end of winter cause to push out and unfold before the frosts are yet gone.

My life must seem as if it were passing at a higher level than that which I occupy. It must possess a dignity which will not allow me to be familiar.

The unpretending truth of a simile implies sometimes such distinctness in the conception as only experience could have supplied. Homer could not improve the simile of a soldier who was careful enough to tell the truth. If he knows what it was, he will know what it was like.

As the ancient Britons were exhibited in Rome in their native costume, and the Dacian came to display his swordsmanship in the arena, so Tyrolese peasants have come farther yet, even from the neighborhood of Rome to Concord, for our entertainment this night.

Feb. 4. *Thursday.* When you are once comfortably seated at a public meeting, there is something unmanly in the sitting on tiptoe and *qui vive* attitude, — the involuntarily rising into your throat, as if gravity had ceased to operate, — when a lady approaches, with quite godlike presumption, to elicit the miracle of a seat where none is.

Music will make the most nervous chord vibrate healthily.

Such a state of unrest becomes only a fluttered virtue. When once I have learned my place in the sphere, I will fill it once for all, rather like a fixed star than a planet. I will rest as the mountains do, so that your ladies might as well walk into the midst of the Tyrol, and look for Nature to spread them a green lawn for their disport in the midst of those solemn fastnesses, as that I should fly out of my orbit at their approach and go about eccentric, like a comet, to endanger other systems. No, be true to your instincts, and sit; wait till you can be genuinely polite, if it be till doomsday, and not lose your chance everlastingly by a cowardly yielding to young etiquette. By your look say unto them, The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places, and I will fill that station God has assigned me. As well Miss Cassiopeia up there might ask the brazen-fronted Taurus to draw in his horns, that she might shine in his stead. No, no! not till my cycle is completed.

How is it that motion will always find space to move in, and rest a seat? Men hate antagonism, and the weaker will always yield to the stronger. If a stranger enter with sufficient determination into a crowded assembly, as if commissioned by the gods to find a seat there, as the falling stone by a divine impulse seeks a resting-place, each one will rise without thinking to offer his place. Now we have only to be commissioned to sit, and depend upon it the gods will not balk their own work. Ye came one day too late, as did the poet after the world had been divided, and so returned to dwell with the god that sent him. When presumptuous womanhood demands to surrender my position, I bide

my time, — though it be with misgiving, — and yield to no mortal shove, but expect a divine impulse. Produce your warrant, and I will retire; for not now can I give you a clear seat, but must leave part of my manhood behind and wander a diminished man, who at length will not have length and breadth enough to fill any seat at all. It was very kind in the gods who gave us a now condition, or condition of rest, in which we might unhurriedly deliberate before taking a step. When I give up my now and here without having secured my then and there, I am the prodigal son of a kind father and deserve no better than the husks which the swine eat, nor that the fatted calf be killed for me.

Rest forever. When instinct comes to the rescue of your politeness, it will seat you securely still, though it be to hang by a rail or poise yourself on a stick. To do otherwise is to be polite only as the soldier who runs away when the enemy demands his post. Politeness is rather when the generals interchange civilities before the fight, not when one returns a sword after the victory.

Not only in his cunning hand and brain, but when he speaks, too, does man assert his superiority. He conquers the spaces with his voice, as well as the lion. The voice of a strong man modulated to the cadence of some tune is more imposing than any natural sound. The keeper's is the most commanding, and is heard over all the din of the menagerie. A strong, musical voice imposes a new order and harmony upon nature; from it as a centre the law is promulgated to the universe. What it lacks in volume and loudness may

always be made up in musical expression and distinctness. The brute growls to secure obedience; he threatens. The man speaks as though obedience were already secured.

Brave speaking is the most entire and richest sacrifice to the gods.

Feb. 5. Friday. Only on rare occasions am I reminded that man too has a voice, as well as birds and quadrupeds, which breaks on the stillness of nature with its peculiar accent. The least sound pervades and subdues all space to it as long as it fills my ear. Contrasted single with the silence, it is as wide as it. Music is the crystallization of sound. There is something in the effect of a harmonious voice upon the disposition of its neighborhood analogous to the law of crystals; it centralizes itself and sounds like the published law of things. If the law of the universe were to be audibly promulgated, no mortal lawgiver would suspect it, for it would be a finer melody than his ears ever attended to. It would be sphere music.[1]

When by tutoring their voices singers enhance one another's performance, the harmony is more complete and essential than is heard. The quire is one family held together by a very close bond. Hence the romance we associate with Gypsies and circus companies and strolling musicians. The idea of brotherhood is so strong in them. Their society is ideal for that one end.

[1] [*Week*, p. 184; Riv. 228.]

There is something in this brotherhood — this feeling of kind, or kindness — which insensibly elevates the subjects of it in our eyes. However poor or mean, they have something which counterbalances our contempt. This is that in the strolling pauper *family* which does not court our charity but can even bless and smile on us and make the kindness reciprocal. It sanctifies the place and the hour.

These Rainers, if they are not brothers and sisters, must be uncles and cousins at least. These Swiss who have come to sing to us, we have no doubt are the flower of the Tyrol.[1] Such is the instinctive kindness with which the foreigner is always received, that he is ever presumed to be the fairest and noblest of his race. The traveller finds that it is not easy to move away from his friends, after all, but all people whom he visits are anxious to supply the place to him of his parents and brothers and sisters. To these Swiss I find that I have attributed all Tell's patriotism and the devotion of Arnold Winkelried and whatever goodness or greatness belongs to the nation.

All costume off a man, when not simply doffed, is grotesque. There must be a heart inside it. When these Swiss appear before me in gaiters and high-crowned hats with feathers, I am disposed to laugh, but soon I see that their serious eye becomes these and they it. It is the sincere life passed within it which consecrates the costume of any people. A sufficiently sober eye will

[1] [See Emerson's Journal (1841), quoted in E. W. Emerson's *Emerson in Concord*, p. 99.]

retrieve itself and subordinate any grotesqueness. Let Harlequin be taken with a fit of the colic in the midst of his buffoonery, and his trappings and finery will serve that mood too and with their drooping sympathy enhance the sincerity of his misfortune. When the soldier is hit by a cannon-ball, rags are as becoming as purple.[1] So soon as a man engages to eat, drink, sleep, walk, and sit, and meet all the contingencies of life therein, his costume is hallowed and a theme for poetry, whether it be a bear's skin or ermine, a beaver hat or a Turkish turban. He will not wear anything because it is blue, or black, or round, or square, but from a necessity which cannot be superseded.

I look into the face and manners for something familiar and homely even, to be assured that the costume of the foreigner is not whimsical or finical.

In all emergencies there is always one step which you may take on firm ground where gravity will assure you footing. So you hold a draft on Fate payable at sight.

Feb. 6. *Saturday.* One may discover a new side to his most intimate friend when for the first time he hears him speak in public. He will be stranger to him as he is more familiar to the audience. The longest intimacy could not foretell how he would behave then. When I observe my friend's conduct toward others, then chiefly I learn the traits in his character, and in each case I am unprepared for the issue.

When one gets up to address briefly a strange audi-

[1] [*Walden*, p. 28 ; Riv. 43.]

ence, in that little he may have opportunity to say he will not quite do himself injustice. For he will instantly and instinctively average himself to his audience, and while he is true to his own character still, he will in a few moments make that impression which a series of months and years would but expand. Before he answers, his thought like lightning runs round the whole compass of his experiences, and he is scrupulous to speak from that which he is and with a more entire truthfulness than usual. How little do we know each other then! Who can tell how his friend would behave on any occasion?

As for those Swiss, I think of the fields their hands have plowed and reaped, and respect their costume as the memorial or rather cotemporary and witness of this. What is there in a toga but a Roman? What but a Quaker in a broad-brimmed hat? He who describes the dress of a Janizary going to war does me a similar service as when he paints the scenery of the battle-field. It helps make his exploit picturesque.

Costume is not determined by whim, not even the tattooing and paint of the savage. Sun, wind, rain, and the form of our bodies shape our hats and coats for us, more even than taste. Good taste secures the utmost gratification without sacrificing any conveniences. If all nations derived their fashions from Paris or London, the world would seem like a Vanity Fair or all fools' day, and the Tartar and Bedouin ride in it like jesters in a circus, and the Pawnee and Esquimau hunt in masquerade. What I am must make you forget what I

wear. The fashionable world is content to be eclipsed by its dress, and never will bear the contrast. Only industry will reform *their* dress. They are idle, — *exo*strious, building without.

The value of the recess in any public entertainment consists in the opportunity for self-recovery which it offers. We who have been swayed as one heart, expanding and contracting with the common pulse, find ourselves in the interim, and set us up again, and feel our own hearts beating in our breasts. We are always a little astonished to see a man walking across the room, through an attentive audience, with any degree of self-possession. He makes himself strange to us. He is a little stubborn withal, and seems to say, "I am self-sustained and independent as well as the performer, and am not to be swallowed up in the common enthusiasm. No, no, there are two of us, and John's as good as Thomas." In the recess the audience is cut up into a hundred little coteries, and as soon as each individual life has recovered its tone and the purposes of health have been answered, it is time for the performances to commence again.

In a public performer, the simplest actions, which at other times are left to unconscious nature, as the ascending a few steps in front of an audience, acquire a fatal importance and become arduous deeds.

When I select one here and another there, and strive to join sundered thoughts, I make but a partial heap

after all. Nature strews her nuts and flowers broadcast, and never collects them into heaps. A man does not tell us all he has thought upon truth or beauty at a sitting, but, from his last thought on the subject, wanders through a varied scenery of upland, meadow, and woodland to his next. Sometimes a single and casual thought rises naturally and inevitably with a queenly majesty and escort, like the stars in the east. Fate has surely enshrined it in this hour and circumstances for some purpose. What she has joined together, let not man put asunder. Shall I transplant the primrose by the river's brim, to set it beside its sister on the mountain? *This* was the soil it grew in, *this* the hour it bloomed in. If sun, wind, and rain came *here* to cherish and expand it, shall not we come here to pluck it? Shall we require it to grow in a conservatory for our convenience?

I feel slightly complimented when Nature condescends to make use of me without my knowledge, as when I help scatter her seeds in my walk, or carry burs and cockles on my clothes from field to field.[1] I feel as though I had done something for the commonweal, and were entitled to board and lodging. I take such airs upon me as the boy who holds a horse for the circus company, whom all the spectators envy.

"Lu ral lu ral lu" may be more impressively sung than very respectable wisdom talked. It is well-timed, as wisdom is not always.

[1] [*Week*, p. 415; Riv. 512.]

All things prophesy but the prophet. In augury and divination nature is put to the torture. In Ben Jonson's tragedy of "Catiline," Lentulus makes answer to Catiline, who has bribed the augurs to say that he is that third Cornelius who is to be king of Rome, "All prophecies, you know, suffer the torture." He who inspects the entrails is *always* bribed, but they are unbribable. He who seeks to know the future by unlawful means has unavoidably subjected the oracle to the torture of *private* and *partial* interests. The oracles of God serve the public interest without fee. To the just and benevolent mind nature *declares*, as the sun lights the world.

Feb. 7. *Sunday.* Without greatcoat or drawers I have advanced thus far into the snow-banks of the winter, without thought and with impunity.[1] When I meet my neighbors in muffs and furs and tippets, they look as if they had retreated into the interior fastnesses from some foe invisible to me. They remind me that this is the season of winter, in which it becomes a man to be cold. For feeling, I am a piece of clean wood of this shape, which will do service till it rots, and though the cold has its physical effect on me, it is a kindly one, for it "finds its acquaintance there." My diet is so little stimulating, and my body in consequence so little heated, as to excite no antagonism in nature, but flourishes like a tree, which finds even the winter genial to its expansion and the secretion of sap. May not the body defend itself against cold by its very nakedness, and its elements be so simple and single that they cannot congeal? Frost

[1] [See p. 214, — bronchitis!]

does not affect one but several. My body now affords no more pasture for cold than a leafless twig.[1] I call it a protestant warmth. My limbs do not tire as formerly, but I use myself as any other piece of nature, and from mere indifference and thoughtlessness may break the timber.

It is the vice of the last season which compels us to arm ourselves for the next. If man always conformed to Nature, he would not have to defend himself against her, but find her his constant nurse and friend, as do plants and quadrupeds.

In the sunshine and the crowing of cocks I feel an illimitable holiness, which makes me bless God and myself. The warm sun casts his incessant gift at my feet as I walk along, unfolding his yellow worlds. Yonder sexton with a few cheap sounds makes me richer than these who mind his summons. The true gift is as wide as my gratitude, and as frequent, and the donor is as grateful as the recipient. There would be a New Year's gift indeed, if we would bestow on each other our sincerity. We should communicate our wealth, and not purchase that which does not belong to us for a sign. Why give each other a sign to keep? If we gave the thing itself, there would be no need of a sign.

I am not sure I should find out a really great person soon. He would be simple Thomas or Oliver for some centuries first. The lesser eminences would hide

[1] [*Excursions*, p. 167; Riv. 203, 204.]

the higher, and I should at last reach his top by a gentle acclivity. I felt it would be necessary to remain some weeks at the Notch to be impressed by the grandeur of the scenery. We do not expect that Alexander will conquer Asia the first time we are introduced to him. A great man accepts the occasion the fates offer him. Let us not be disappointed. We stand at first upon the pampas which surround him. It is these mountains round about which make the valleys here below. He is not a dead level, so many feet above low-water mark. Greatness is in the ascent. But there is no accounting for the little men.

> "They must sweat no less
> To fit their properties, than t' express their parts."

Or the line before this: —

> "Would you have
> Such an Herculean actor in the scene,
> And not his hydra?" — JONSON.

The eaves are running on the south side of the house; the titmouse lisps in the poplar; the bells are ringing for church; while the sun presides over all and makes his simple warmth more obvious than all else.[1] What shall I do with this hour, so like time and yet so fit for eternity? Where in me are these russet patches of ground, and scattered logs and chips in the yard? I do not feel cluttered. I have some notion what the John's-wort and life-everlasting may be thinking about when the sun shines on me as on them and turns my prompt thought into just such a seething shimmer. I lie out in-

[1] [*Excursions*, p. 173; Riv. 211.]

distinct as a heath at noonday. I am evaporating and ascending into the sun.

Nothing stands in the way to success, but to failure. To victory is all the way up hill; to defeat the simplest wight that weighs may soon slide down. Cowards would not have victory but the fruits of victory; but she it is that sweetens all the spoil. Thus, by a just fate, the booty cannot fall to him who did not win it. There is victory in every effort. In the least swing of the arm, in indignant thought, in stern content, we conquer our foes.

Great thoughts make great men. Without these no heraldry nor blood will avail.

The blood circulates to the feet and hands, but the thought never descends from the head.

The most I can do for my friend is simply to be his friend. I have no wealth to bestow on him. If he knows that I am happy in loving him, he will want no other reward. Is not Friendship divine in this?

I have myself to respect, but to myself I am not amiable; but my friend is my amiableness personified.

And yet we walk the stage indifferent actors, not thinking what a sublime drama we might enact if we would be joint workers and a mutual material. Why go to the woods to cut timber to display our art upon, when here are men as trees walking? The world has never learned what men can build each other up to be, when both master and pupil work in love.

He that comes as a stranger to my house will have to stay as a stranger. He has made his own reception. But persevering love was never yet refused.

"The vicious count their years, virtuous their acts."

JONSON.

The former consider the length of their service, the latter its quality.

Wait not till I invite thee, but observe
I 'm glad to see thee when thou com'st.[1]

The most ardent lover holds yet a private court, and his love can never be so strong or ethereal that there will not be danger that judgment may be rendered against the beloved.

I would have men make a *greater* use of me.[2] Now I must belittle myself to have dealings with them. My friend will show such a noble confidence that I shall aspire to the society of his good opinion. Never presume men less that you may make them more. So far as we respond to our ideal estimate of each other do we have profitable intercourse.

A brave man always knows the way, no matter how intricate the roads.

Feb. 8. All we have experienced is so much gone within us, and there lies. It is the company we keep. One day,

[1] [*Week*, p. 289 ; Riv. 359.] [2] [See p. 180.]

in health or sickness, it will come out and be remembered. Neither body nor soul forgets anything. The twig always remembers the wind that shook it, and the stone the cuff it received. Ask the old tree and the sand.

To be of most service to my brother I must meet him on the most equal and even ground, the platform on which our lives are passing. But how often does politeness permit this?

I seek a man who will appeal to me when I am in fault. We will treat as gods settling the affairs of men. In his intercourse I shall be always a god to-day, who was a man yesterday. He will never confound me with my guilt, but let me be immaculate and hold up my skirts. Differences he will make haste to clear up, but leave agreements unsettled the while.

As time is measured by the lapse of ideas, we may grow of our own force, as the mussel adds new circles to its shell. My thoughts secrete the lime. We may grow old with the vigor of youth. Are we not always in youth so long as we face heaven? We may always live in the morning of our days. To him who seeks early, the sun never gets over the edge of the hill, but his rays fall slanting forever. His wise sayings are like the chopping of wood and crowing of cocks in the dawn.

My Journal is that of me which would else spill over and run to waste, gleanings from the field which in action I reap. I must not live for it, but in it for the gods.

They are my correspondent, to whom daily I send off this sheet postpaid. I am clerk in their counting-room, and at evening transfer the account from day-book to ledger. It is as a leaf which hangs over my head in the path. I bend the twig and write my prayers on it; then letting it go, the bough springs up and shows the scrawl to heaven. As if it were not kept shut in my desk, but were as public a leaf as any in nature. It is papyrus by the riverside; it is vellum in the pastures; it is parchment on the hills. I find it everywhere as free as the leaves which troop along the lanes in autumn. The crow, the goose, the eagle carry my quill, and the wind blows the leaves as far as I go. Or, if my imagination does not soar, but gropes in slime and mud, then I write with a reed.

It is always a chance scrawl, and commemorates some accident, — as great as earthquake or eclipse. Like the sere leaves in yonder vase, these have been gathered far and wide. Upland and lowland, forest and field have been ransacked.

In our holiest moment our devil with a leer stands close at hand. He is a very busy devil. It gains vice some respect, I must confess, thus to be reminded how indefatigable it is. It has at least the merit of industriousness. When I go forth with zeal to some good work, my devil is sure to get his robe tucked up the first and arrives there as soon as I, with a look of sincere earnestness which puts to shame my best intent. He is as forward as I to a good work, and as disinterested. He has a winning way of recommending himself by mak-

ing himself useful. How readily he comes into my best project, and does his work with a quiet and steady cheerfulness which even virtue may take pattern from.

I never was so rapid in my virtue but my vice kept up with me. It always came in by a hand, and never panting, but with a curried coolness halted, as if halting were the beginning not the end of the course. It only runs the swifter because it has no rider. It never was behind me but when I turned to look and so fell behind myself. I never did a charitable thing but there he stood, scarce in the rear, with hat in hand, partner on the same errand, ready to share the smile of gratitude. Though I shut the door never so quick and tell it to stay at home like a good dog, it will out with me, for I shut in my own legs so, and it escapes in the meanwhile and is ready to back and reinforce me in most virtuous deeds. And if I turn and say, "Get thee behind me," he then indeed turns too and takes the lead, though he seems to retire with a pensive and compassionate look, as much as to say, "Ye know not what ye do."

Just as active as I become to virtue, just so active is my remaining vice. Every time we teach our virtue a new nobleness, we teach our vice a new cunning. When we sharpen the blade it will stab better as well as whittle. The scythe that cuts will cut our legs. We are double-edged blades, and every time we whet our virtue the return stroke straps our vice. And when we cut a clear descending blow, our vice on tother edge rips up the work. Where is the skillful swordsman that can draw his blade straight back out of the wound? [1]

[1] [*Week*, p. 236; Riv. 293.]

Every man proposes fairly, and does not willfully take the devil for his guide; as our shadows never fall between us and the sun. Go towards the sun and your shadow will fall behind you.

Feb. 9. *Tuesday.*

"*Cato.* Good Marcus Tullius (which is more than great),
Thou hadst thy education with the gods."

JONSON.

Better be defamed than overpraised. Thou canst then justly praise thyself. What notoriety art thou that can be defamed? Who can be praised for what they are not deserve rather to be damned for what they are. It is hard to wear a dress that is too long and loose without stumbling.

"Whoe'er is raised,
For wealth he has not, he is tax'd, not prais'd,"

says Jonson. If you mind the flatterer, you rob yourself and still cheat him. The fates never exaggerate; men pass for what they are. The state never fails to get a revenue out of you without a direct tax. Flattery would lay a direct tax. What I am praised for what I am not I put to the account of the gods. It needs a skillful eye to distinguish between their coin and my own. But however there can be no loss either way, for what meed I have earned is equally theirs. Let neither fame nor infamy hit you, but the one go as far beyond as the other falls behind. Let the one glance past you to the gods, and the other wallow where it was engendered. The home thrusts are at helmets upon blocks, and my worst foes but stab an armor through.

My life at this moment is like a summer morning when birds are singing. Yet that is false, for nature's is an idle pleasure in comparison: my hour has a more solid serenity. I have been breaking silence these twenty-three years and have hardly made a rent in it. Silence has no end; speech is but the beginning of it. My friend thinks I *keep* silence, who am only choked with letting it out so fast. Does he forget that new mines of secrecy are constantly opening in me?

If any scorn your love, let them see plainly that you serve not them but another. If these bars are up, go your way to other of God's pastures, and browse there the while. When your host shuts his door on you he incloses you in the dwelling of nature. He thrusts you over the threshold of the world. My foes restore me to my friends.

I might say friendship had no ears as love has no eyes, for no word is evidence in its court. The least act fulfills more than all words profess. The most gracious speech is but partial kindness, but the least genuine deed takes the whole man. If we had waited till doomsday it could never have been uttered.

Feb. 10. *Wednesday.* That was fine praise which Ben Jonson gave to Thomas, Lord Chancellor: —

> "Whilst thou art certain to thy words, once gone,
> As is thy conscience, which is always one."

Words do not lose their truth by time or misinterpretation, but stand unscathed longer than he who spoke them.

Let our words be such as we may unblushingly behold sculptured in granite on the walls to the least syllable. Our thoughts and actions may be very private for a long time, for they demand a more catholic publicity to be displayed in than the world can afford. Our best deeds shun the narrow walks of men, and are not ambitious of the faint light the world can shed on them, but delight to unfold themselves in that public ground between God and conscience.

Truth has for audience and spectator all the world. Within, where I resolve and deal with principles, there is more space and room than anywhere without, where my hands execute. Men should hear of your virtue only as they hear the creaking of the earth's axle and the music of the spheres. It will fall into the course of nature and be effectually concealed by publicness.

I asked a man to-day if he would rent me some land, and he said he had four acres as good soil "as any outdoors." It was a true poet's account of it. He and I, and all the world, went outdoors to breathe the free air and stretch ourselves. For the world is but outdoors, — and we duck behind a panel.

Feb. 11. True help, for the most part, implies a greatness in him who is to be helped as well as in the helper. It takes a god to be helped even. A great person, though unconsciously, will constantly give you great opportunities to serve him, but a mean one will quite preclude all active benevolence. It needs but simply and *greatly* to want it for once, that all true men may contend who

shall be foremost to render aid. My neighbor's state must pray to heaven so devoutly yet disinterestedly as he never prayed in words, before my ears can hear. It must ask divinely. But men so cobble and botch their request, that you must stoop as low as they to give them aid. Their meanness would drag down your deed to be a compromise with conscience, and not leave it to be done on the high table-land of the benevolent soul. They would have you doff your bright and knightly armor and drudge for them, — serve *them* and not God. But if I am to serve them I must not serve the devil.

What is called charity is no charity, but the interference of a third person. Shall I interfere with fate? Shall I defraud man of the opportunities which God gave him, and so take away his life? Beggars and silent poor cry — how often! — "Get between me and my god." I will not stay to cobble and patch God's rents, but do clean, new work when he has given me my hands full. This almshouse charity is like putting new wine into old bottles, when so many tuns in God's cellars stand empty. We go about mending the times, when we should be building the eternity.

I must serve a strong master, not a weak one. Help implies a sympathy of energy and effort, else no alleviation will avail.

Feb. 12. *Friday.* Those great men who are unknown to their own generation are already famous in the society of the great who have gone before them. All worldly fame but subsides from their high estimate beyond the

stars. We may still keep pace with those who have gone out of nature, for we run on as smooth ground as they.

The early and the latter saints are separated by no eternal interval.

The child may soon stand face to face with the best father.

Feb. 13. By the truthfulness of our story to-day we help explain ourselves for all our life henceforth. How we hamper and belay ourselves by the least exaggeration! The truth is God's concern; He will sustain it; but who can afford to maintain a lie? We have taken away one of the Pillars of Hercules, and must support the world on our shoulders, who might have walked freely upon it.

My neighbor says that his hill-farm is poor stuff and "only fit to hold the world together." [1] He deserves that God should give him better for so brave a treating of his gifts, instead of humbly putting up therewith. It is a sort of stay, or gore, or gusset, and he will not be blinded by modesty or gratitude, but sees it for what it is; knowing his neighbor's fertile land, he calls his by its right name. But perhaps my farmer forgets that his lean soil has sharpened his wits. This is a crop it was good for. And beside, you see the heavens at a lesser angle from the hill than from the vale.

We have nothing to fear from our foes; God keeps a standing army for that service; but we have no ally

[1] [*Week*, p. 50; Riv. 63.]

against our friends, those ruthless vandals whose kind intent is a subtler poison than the Colchian, a more fatal shaft than the Lydian.[1]

Feb. 14. *Sunday.* I am confined to the house by bronchitis, and so seek to content myself with that quiet and serene life there is in a warm corner by the fireside, and see the sky through the chimney-top. Sickness should not be allowed to extend further than the body. We need only to retreat further within us to preserve uninterrupted the continuity of serene hours to the end of our lives.

As soon as I find my chest is not of tempered steel, and heart of adamant, I bid good-by to these and look out a new nature. I will be liable to no accidents.

I shall never be poor while I can command a still hour in which to take leave of my sin.

The jingling team which is creaking past reminds me of that verse in the Bible which speaks of God being heard in the bells of the horses.

Feb. 15. There is elevation in every hour. No part of the earth is so low and withdrawn that the heavens cannot be seen from it, but every part supports the sky. We have only to stand on the eminence of the hour, and look out thence into the empyrean, allowing no pinnacle above us, to command an uninterrupted horizon. The moments will lie outspread around us like a blue ex-

[1] [*Week*, p. 305; Riv. 379.]

panse of mountain and valley, while we stand on the summit of our hour as if we had descended on eagle's wings. For the eagle has stooped to his perch on the highest cliff and has never climbed the rock; he stands by his wings more than by his feet. We shall not want a foothold, but wings will sprout from our shoulders, and we shall walk securely, self-sustained.

For how slight an accident shall two noble souls wait to bring them together!

Feb. 17. Our work should be fitted to and lead on the time, as bud, flower, and fruit lead the circle of the seasons.

The mechanic works no longer than his labor will pay for lights, fuel, and shop rent. Would it not be well for us to consider if our deed will warrant the expense of nature? Will it maintain the sun's light?

Our actions do not use time independently, as the bud does. They should constitute its lapse. It is their room. But they shuffle after and serve the hour.

Feb. 18. *Thursday.* I do not judge men by anything they can do. Their greatest deed is the impression they make on me. Some serene, inactive men can do everything. Talent only indicates a depth of character in some direction. We do not acquire the ability to do new deeds, but a new capacity for all deeds. My recent growth does not appear in any visible new talent, but

its deed will enter into my gaze when I look into the sky, or vacancy. It will help me to consider ferns and everlasting. Man is like a tree which is limited to no age, but grows as long as it has its root in the ground. We have only to live in the alburnum and not in the old wood. The gnarled stump has as tender a bud as the sapling.

Sometimes I find that I have frequented a higher society during sleep, and my thoughts and actions proceed on a higher level in the morning.

A man is the hydrostatic paradox, the counterpoise of the system. You have studied flowers and birds cheaply enough, but you must lay yourself out to buy him.

Feb. 19. A truly good book attracts very little favor to itself. It is so true that it teaches me better than to read it. I must soon lay it down and commence living on its hint. I do not see how any can be written more, but this is the last effusion of genius. When I read an indifferent book, it seems the best thing I can do, but the inspiring volume hardly leaves me leisure to finish its latter pages. It is slipping out of my fingers while I read. It creates no atmosphere in which it may be perused, but one in which its teachings may be practiced. It confers on me such wealth that I lay it down with the least regret. What I began by reading I must finish by acting. So I cannot stay to hear a *good* sermon and applaud at the conclusion, but shall be half-way to Thermopylæ before that.

When any joke or hoax traverses the Union in the newspapers it apprises me of a fact which no geography or guide-book contains, of a certain leisure and nonchalance pervading society. It is a piece of information from over the Alleghanies, which I know how to prize, though I did not expect it. And it is just so in Nature. I sometimes observe in her a strange trifling, almost listlessness, which conducts to beauty and grace, — the fantastic and whimsical forms of snow and ice, the unaccountable freaks which the tracks of rabbits exhibit. I know now why all those busy speculators do not die of fever and ague.

Coleridge observed the "landscapes made by damp on a whitewashed wall," and so have I.

We seem but to linger in manhood to tell the dreams of our childhood, and they vanish out of memory ere we learn the language.[1]

It is the unexplored grandeur of the storm which keeps up the spirits of the traveller.[2] When I contemplate a hard and bare life in the woods, I find my last consolation in its untrivialness. Shipwreck is less distressing because the breakers do not trifle with us. We are resigned as long as we recognize the sober and solemn mystery of nature. The dripping mariner finds consolation and sympathy in the infinite sublimity of the storm. It is a moral force as well as he. With courage he can lay down his life on the strand, for it never

[1] [*Week*, p. 406; Riv. 501.] [2] [*Excursions*, p. 182; Riv. 222.]

turned a deaf ear to him, nor has he ever exhausted its sympathy.

In the love of narrow souls I make many short voyages, but in vain; I find no sea-room. But in great souls I sail before the wind without a watch, and never reach the shore.

You demand that I be less your friend that you may know it.

Nothing will reconcile friends but love. They make a fatal mistake when they go about like foes to explain and treat with one another. It is a mutual mistake. None are so unmanageable.

Feb. 20. *Saturday.* I suspect the moral discrimination of the oldest and best authors. I doubt if Milton distinguished greatly between his Satan and his Raphael. In Homer and Æschylus and Dante I miss a nice discrimination of the *important* shades of character.

When I am going out for an evening I arrange the fire in my stove so that I do not fail to find a good one when I return, though it would have engaged my frequent attention present. So that, when I know I am to be at home, I sometimes make believe that I may go out, to save trouble. And this is the art of living, too, — to leave our life in a condition to go alone, and not to require a constant supervision. We will then sit down serenely to live, as by the side of a stove.

When I sit in earnest, nothing must stand, all must be sedentary with me.

I hear the faint sound of a viol and voices from the neighboring cottage, and think to myself, "I will believe the Muse only for evermore." It assures me that no gleam which comes over the serene soul is deceptive. It warns me of a reality and substance, of which the best that I see is but the phantom and shadow. O music, thou tellest me of things of which memory takes no heed; thy strains are whispered aside from memory's ear.

This is the noblest plain of earth, over which these sounds are borne, the plain of Troy or Eleusis.

Thou openest all my senses to catch thy least hint, and givest me no thought. It would be good to sit at my door of summer evenings forever and hear thy strains. Thou makest me to toy with speech, or walk content without it, not regretting its absence. I am pleased to think how ignorant and shiftless the wisest are. My imperfect sympathies with my friend are cheerful, glimmering light in the valley.

Feb. 21. *Sunday.* It is hard to preserve equanimity and greatness on that debatable ground between love and esteem. There is nothing so stable and unfluctuating as love. The waves beat steadfast on its shore forever, and its tide has no ebb. It is a resource in all extremities, and a refuge even from itself. And yet love will not be leaned on.

Feb. 22. Love is the tenderest mood of that which is tough — and the toughest mood of that which is tender. It may be roughly handled as the nettle, or gently as the violet. It has its holidays, but is not made for them.

The whole of the day should not be daytime, nor of the night night-time, but some portion be rescued from time to oversee time in. All our hours must not be current; all our time must not lapse. There must be one hour at least which the day did not bring forth, — of ancient parentage and long-established nobility, — which will be a serene and lofty platform overlooking the rest. We should make our notch every day on our characters, as Robinson Crusoe on his stick. We must be at the helm at least once a day; we must feel the tiller-rope in our hands, and know that if we sail, we steer.

Friends will be much apart; they will respect more each other's privacy than their communion, for therein is the fulfillment of our high aims and the conclusion of our arguments. That we know and would associate with not only has high intents, but goes on high errands, and has much private business. The hours he devotes to me were snatched from higher society. He is hardly a gift level to me, but I have to reach up to take it. My imagination always assigns him a nobler employment in my absence than ever I find him engaged in.[1]

We have to go into retirement religiously, and en-

[1] [*Week*, p. 288; Riv. 358.]

hance our meeting by rarity and a degree of unfamiliarity. Would you know why I see thee so seldom, my friend? In solitude I have been making up a packet for thee.

The actions which grow out of some common but natural relations affect me strangely, as sometimes the behavior of a mother to her children. So quiet and noiseless an action often moves me more than many sounding exploits.

Feb. 23. *Tuesday.* Let all our stores and munitions be provided for the lone state.

The care of the body is the highest exercise of prudence. If I have brought this weakness on my lungs, I will consider calmly and disinterestedly how the thing came about, that I may find out the truth and render justice. Then, after patience, I shall be a wiser man than before.

Let us apply all our wit to the repair of our bodies, as we would mend a harrow, for the body will be dealt plainly and implicitly with. We want no moonshine nor surmises about it. This matter of health and sickness has no fatality in it, but is a subject for the merest prudence. If I know not what ails me, I may resort to amulets and charms and, moonstruck, die of dysentery.

We do wrong to slight our sickness and feel so ready to desert our posts when we are harassed. So much the more should we rise above our condition, and make

the most of it, for the fruit of disease may be as good as that of health.[1]

There is a subtle elixir in society which makes it a fountain of health to the sick. We want no consolation which is not the overflow of our friend's health. We will have no condolence who are not dolent ourselves. We would have our friend come and respire healthily before us, with the fragrance of many meadows and heaths in his breath, and we will inhabit his body while our own recruits.

Nothing is so good medicine in sickness as to witness some nobleness in another which will advertise us of health. In sickness it is our faith that ails, and noble deeds reassure us.

That anybody has thought of you on some indifferent occasion frequently implies more good will than you had reason to expect. You have henceforth a higher motive for conduct. We do not know how many amiable thoughts are current.

Feb. 26. *Friday.* My prickles or smoothness are as much a quality of your hand as of myself. I cannot tell you what I am, more than a ray of the summer's sun. What I am I am, and say not. Being is the great explainer. In the attempt to explain, shall I plane away all the spines, till it is no thistle, but a cornstalk?

[1] [See his sister's account of his last sickness in Sanborn's *Thoreau*, pp. 310–313.]

If my world is not sufficient without thee, my friend, I will wait till it is and then call thee. You shall come to a palace, not to an almshouse.

My homeliest thought, like the diamond brought from farthest within the mine, will shine with the purest lustre.

Though I write every day, yet when I say a good thing it seems as if I wrote but rarely.

To be great, we do as if we would be tall merely, be longer than we are broad, stretch ourselves and stand on tiptoe. But greatness is well proportioned, unstrained, and stands on the soles of the feet.

How many are waiting for health and warm weather! But they wait for none.

In composition I miss the hue of the mind. As if we could be satisfied with the dews of the morning and evening without their colors, or the heavens without their azure.[1]

This good book helps the sun shine in my chamber. The rays fall on its page as if to explain and illustrate it.[2]

I who have been sick hear cattle low in the street, with such a healthy ear as prophesies my cure. These sounds lay a finger on my pulse to some purpose. A

[1] [*Week*, p. 106; Riv. 132.] [2] [*Week*, p. 157; Riv. 195.]

fragrance comes in at all my senses which proclaims that I am still of Nature the child. The threshing in yonder barn and the tinkling of the anvil come from the same side of Styx with me. If I were a physician I would try my patients thus. I would wheel them to a window and let Nature feel their pulse. It will soon appear if their sensuous existence is sound. These sounds are but the throbbing of some pulse in me.[1]

Nature seems to have given me these hours to pry into her private drawers. I watch the shadow of the insensible perspiration rising from my coat or hand on the wall. I go and feel my pulse in all the recesses of the house and see if I am of force to carry a homely life and comfort into them.

Feb. 27. Saturday. Life looks as fair at this moment as a summer's sea, or a blond dress in a saffron light, with its sun and grass and walled towns so bright and chaste, as fair as my own virtue which would adventure therein. Like a Persian city or hanging gardens in the distance, so washed in light, so untried, only to be thridded by clean thoughts. All its flags are flowing, and tassels streaming, and drapery flapping, like some gay pavilion. The heavens hang over it like some low screen, and seem to undulate in the breeze.

Through this pure, unwiped hour, as through a crystal glass, I look out upon the future, as a smooth lawn for my virtue to disport in. It shows from afar as unrepulsive as the sunshine upon walls and cities, over

[1] [*Excursions*, p. 182; Riv. 223.]

which the passing life moves as gently as a shadow. I see the course of my life, like some retired road, wind on without obstruction into a country maze.[1]

I am attired for the future so, as the sun setting presumes all men at leisure and in contemplative mood, — and am thankful that it is thus presented blank and indistinct. It still o'ertops my hope. My future deeds bestir themselves within me and move grandly towards a consummation, as ships go down the Thames. A steady onward motion I feel in me, as still as that, or like some vast, snowy cloud, whose shadow first is seen across the fields. It is the material of all things loose and set afloat that makes my sea.

These various words are not without various meanings. The combined voice of the race makes nicer distinctions than any individual. There are the words "diversion" and "amusement." It takes more to amuse than to divert. We must be surrendered to our amusements, but only turned aside to our diversions. We have no will in the former, but oversee the latter. We are oftenest diverted in the street, but amused in our chambers. We are diverted from our engagements, but amused when we are listless. We may be diverted from an amusement, and amused by a diversion. It often happens that a diversion becomes our amusement, and our amusement our employment.

Feb. 28. Nothing goes by luck in composition. It allows of no tricks. The best you can write will be the

[1] [See *Week*, p. 45 ; Riv. 57.]

best you are. Every sentence is the result of a long probation. The author's character is read from title-page to end. Of this he never corrects the proofs. We read it as the essential character of a handwriting without regard to the flourishes. And so of the rest of our actions; it runs as straight as a ruled line through them all, no matter how many curvets about it. Our whole life is taxed for the least thing well done; it is its net result. How we eat, drink, sleep, and use our desultory hours, now in these indifferent days, with no eye to observe and no occasion [to] excite us, determines our authority and capacity for the time to come.

March 3. I hear a man blowing a horn this still evening, and it sounds like the plaint of nature in these times. In this, which I refer to some man, there is something greater than any man. It is as if the earth spoke. It adds a great remoteness to the horizon, and its very distance is grand, as when one draws back the head to speak. That which I now hear in the west seems like an invitation to the east. It runs round the earth as a whisper gallery. It is the spirit of the West calling to the spirit of the East, or else it is the rattling of some team lagging in Day's train. Coming to me through the darkness and silence, all things great seem transpiring there. It is friendly as a distant hermit's taper. When it is trilled, or undulates, the heavens are crumpled into time, and successive waves flow across them.

It is a strangely healthy sound for these disjointed times. It is a rare soundness when cow-bells and horns are heard from over the fields. And now I see the beauty

and full meaning of that word "sound." Nature always possesses a certain sonorousness, as in the hum of insects, the booming of ice, the crowing of cocks in the morning, and the barking of dogs in the night, which indicates her sound state.[1] God's voice is but a clear bell sound. I drink in a wonderful health, a cordial, in sound. The effect of the slightest tinkling in the horizon measures my own soundness. I thank God for sound; it always mounts, and makes me mount. I think I will not trouble myself for any wealth, when I can be so cheaply enriched. Here I contemplate to drudge that I may own a farm — and may have such a limitless estate for the listening. All good things are cheap: all bad are very dear.

As for these communities, I think I had rather keep bachelor's hall in hell than go to board in heaven. Do you think your virtue will be boarded with you? It will never live on the interest of your money, depend upon it. The boarder has no home. In heaven I hope to bake my own bread and clean my own linen. The tomb is the only boarding-house in which a hundred are served at once. In the catacomb we may dwell together and prop one another without loss.

March 4. Ben Jonson says in his epigrams, —

"He makes himself a thorough-fare of Vice."

This is true, for by vice the substance of a man is not changed, but all his pores, and cavities, and avenues are

[1] [*Week*, p. 40; Riv. 50.]

prophaned by being made the thoroughfares of vice. He is the highway of his vice. The searching devil courses through and through him. His flesh and blood and bones are cheapened. He is all trivial, a place where three highways of sin meet. So is another the thoroughfare of virtue, and virtue circulates through all his aisles like a wind, and he is hallowed.

We reprove each other unconsciously by our own behavior. Our very carriage and demeanor in the streets should be a reprimand that will go to the conscience of every beholder. An infusion of love from a great soul gives a color to our faults, which will discover them, as lunar caustic detects impurities in water.

The best will not seem to go contrary to others, but, as if *they* could afford to travel the same way, they go a parallel but higher course, a sort of upper road. Jonson says, —

> "That to the vulgar canst thyself apply,
> Treading a better path not contrary."

Their way is a mountain slope, a river valley's course, a tide which mingles a myriad lesser currents.

March 5. Friday. How can our love increase, unless our loveliness increase also? We must securely love each other as we love God, with no more danger that our love be unrequited or ill-bestowed. There is that in my friend before which I must first decay and prove untrue. Love is the least moral and the most. Are the best good in their love? or the worst, bad?

March 6. An honest misunderstanding is often the ground of future intercourse.

"THE SPHINX" [1]

March 7, 8, 9, 10. The Sphinx is man's insatiable and questioning spirit, which still, as of old, stands by the roadside in us and proposes the riddle of life to every passer. The ancients represented this by a monster who was a riddle of herself, having a body composed of various creatures, as if to hint that she had no individual existence, but was nearly allied to and brooded over all. They made her devour those who were unable to explain her enigmas, as we are devoured by doubt, and struggle towards the light, as if to be assured of our lives. For we live by confidence, and our bravery is in some moment when we are certain to that degree that our certainty cannot be increased; as, when a ray bursts through a gap in a cloud, it darts as far, and reaches the earth as surely, as the whole sun would have done.

1. In the first four lines is described the mood in which the Sphinx bestirs herself in us. We must look on the world with a drowsy and half-shut eye, that it may not be too much in our eye, and rather stand aloof from than within it. When we are awake to the real world, we are asleep to the actual. The sinful drowse to eternity, the virtuous to time. Menu says that the "supreme omnipresent intelligence" is "a spirit which can only be conceived by a mind *slumbering*." Wisdom

[1] [An interpretation of Emerson's poem. The numbers refer to the stanzas.]

and holiness always slumber; they are never active in the ways of the world. As in our night-dreams we are nearest to awakening, so in our day-dreams we are nearest to a supernatural awakening, and the plain and flat satisfactoriness of life becomes so significant as to be questioned.

The Sphinx hints that in the ages her secret is kept, but in the annihilation of ages alone is it revealed. So far from solving the problem of life, Time only serves to propose and keep it in. Time waits but for its solution to become eternity. Its lapse is measured by the successive failures to answer the incessant question, and the generations of men are the unskillful passengers devoured.

2. She hints generally at man's mystery. He knows only that he is, not what, nor whence. Not only is he curiously and wonderfully wrought, but with Dædalian intricacy. He is lost in himself as a labyrinth and has no clue to get out by. If he could get out of his humanity, he would have got out of nature. "Dædalian" expresses both the skill and the inscrutable design of the builder.

The insolubleness of the riddle is only more forcibly expressed by the lines, —

> "Out of sleeping a waking,
> Out of waking a sleep."

They express the complete uncertainty and renunciation of knowledge of the propounder.

3, 4, 5, 6. In these verses is described the integrity of all animate and inanimate things but man, — how each is a problem of itself and not the solution of one

and presides over and uses the mystery of the universe as unhesitatingly as if it were the partner of God; how, by a sort of *essential and practical faith*, each understands all, for to see that we understand is to know that we misunderstand. Each natural object is an end to itself. A brave, undoubting life do they all live, and are content to be a part of the mystery which is God, and throw the responsibility on man of explaining them and himself too.

3. The outlines of the trees are as correct as if ruled by God on the sky. The motions of quadrupeds and birds Nature never thinks to mend, but they are a last copy and the flourishes of His hand.

4. The waves lapse with such a melody on the shore as shows that they have long been at one with Nature. Theirs is as perfect play as if the heavens and earth were not. They meet with a sweet difference and independently, as old playfellows. Nothing do they lack more than the world. The ripple is proud to be a ripple and balances the sea. The atoms, which are in such a continual flux, notwithstanding their minuteness, have a certain essential valor and independence. They have the integrity of worlds, and attract and repel firmly as such. The least has more manhood than Democritus.

5. So also in Nature the perfection of the whole is the perfection of the parts, and what is itself perfect serves to adorn and set off all the rest. Her distinctions are but reliefs. Night veileth the morning for the morning's sake, and the vapor adds a new attraction to the hill. Nature looks like a conspiracy for the advantage

of all her parts; when one feature shines, all the rest seem suborned to heighten its charm. In her circle each gladly gives precedence to the other. Day gladly alternates with night. Behind these the vapor atones to the hill for its interference, and this harmonious scene is the effect of that at-one-ment.

6. In a sense the babe takes its departure from Nature as the grown man his departure out of her, and so during its nonage is at one with her, and as a part of herself. It is indeed the very flower and blossom of Nature.

> "Shines the peace of all being
> Without cloud, in its eyes;
> And the *sum* of the world
> In soft *miniature* lies." [1]

To the charming consistency of the palm and thrush, this universal and serene beauty is added, as all the leaves of the tree flower in the blossom.

7. But alas, the fruit to be matured in these petals is fated to break the stem which holds it to universal consistency. It passes *through Nature* to manhood, and becomes unnatural, without being as yet quite supernatural. Man's most approved life is but conformity, not a simple and independent consistency, which would make all things conform to it. His actions do not adorn Nature nor one another, nor does she exist in harmony but in contrast with them. She is not their willing scenery. We conceive that if a true action were to be performed it would be assisted by Nature, and perhaps be fondled and reflected many times as the rainbow. The sun is a true light for the trees in a picture, but not

[1] [The italics are Thoreau's.]

for the actions of men. They will not bear so strong a light as the stubble; the universe has little sympathy with them, and sooner or later they rebound hollowly on the memory. The April shower should be as reviving to our life as to the garden and the grove, and the scenery in which we live reflect our own beauty, as the dewdrop the flower. It is the actual man, not the actual Nature, that hurts the romance of the landscape. "He poisons the ground." The haymakers must be lost in the grass of the meadow. They may be Faustus and Amyntas here, but near at hand they are Reuben and Jonas. The woodcutter must not be better than the wood, lest he be *worse*. Neither will bear to be considered as a distinct feature. Man's works must lie in the bosom of Nature, cottages be buried in trees, or under vines and moss, like rocks, that they may not outrage the landscape. The hunter must be dressed in Lincoln green, with a plume of eagle's feathers, to imbosom him in Nature. So the skillful painter secures the distinctness of the whole by the indistinctness of the parts. We can endure best to consider our repose and silence. Only when the city, the hamlet, or the cottage is viewed from a distance does man's life seem in harmony with the universe; but seen closely his actions have no eagle's feathers or Lincoln green to redeem them. The sunlight on cities at a distance is a deceptive beauty, but foretells the final harmony of man with Nature.

Man as he is, is not the subject of any art, strictly speaking. The naturalist pursues his study with love, but the moralist persecutes his with hate. In man is the material of a picture, with a design partly sketched,

but Nature is such a picture drawn and colored. He is a studio, Nature a gallery. If men were not idealists, no sonnets to beautiful persons nor eulogies on worthy ones would ever be written. We wait for the preacher to express *such* love for his congregation as the botanist for his herbarium.

8. Man, however, detects something in the lingering ineradicable sympathy of Nature which seems to side with him against the stern decrees of the soul. Her essential friendliness is only the more apparent to his waywardness, for disease and sorrow are but a rupture with her. In proportion as he renounces his will, she repairs his hurts, and, if she burns, does oftener warm, if she freezes, oftener refreshes. This is the motherliness which the poet personifies, and the Sphinx, or wisely inquiring man, makes express a real concern for him. Nature shows us a stern kindness, and only we are unkind. She endures long with us, and though the severity of her law is unrelaxed, yet its evenness and impartiality look relenting, and almost sympathize with our fault.

9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14. But to the poet there are no riddles. They are "pleasant songs" to him; his faith solves the enigmas which recurring wisdom does not fail to repeat. Poetry is the only solution time can offer. But the poet is soonest a pilgrim from his own faith. Our brave moments may still be distinguished from our wise. Though the problem is always solved for the soul, still does it remain to be solved by the intellect. Almost faith puts the question, for only in her light can it be answered. However true the answer, it does not pre-

vent the question; for the best answer is but plausible, and man can only tell his relation to truth, but render no account of truth to herself.

9. Believe, and ask not, says the poet.

> "Deep love lieth under
> These pictures of time;
> They fade in the light of
> Their meaning sublime."

Nothing is plain but love.

10, 11, 12, 13. Man comes short, because he seeks perfection. He adorns no world, while he is seeking to adorn a better. His best actions have no reference to their actual scenery. For when our actions become of that worth that they might confer a grace on Nature, they pass out of her into a higher arena, where they are still mean and awkward. So that the world beholds only the rear of great deeds, and mistakes them often for inconsistencies, not knowing with what higher they consist. Nature is beautiful as in repose, not promising a higher beauty to-morrow. Her actions are level to one another, and so are never unfit or inconsistent. Shame and remorse, which are so unsightly to her, have a prospective beauty and fitness which redeem them. We would have our lover to be nobler than we, and do not fear to sacrifice our love to his greater nobleness. Better the disagreement of noble lovers than the agreement of base ones. In friendship each will be nobler than the other, and so avoid the cheapness of a level and idle harmony. Love will have its chromatic strains, — discordant yearnings for higher chords, — as well as symphonies. Let us expect no finite satisfaction.

13. Who looks in the sun will see no light else; but also he will see no shadow. Our life revolves unceasingly, but the centre is ever the same, and the wise will regard only the seasons of the soul.

14. The poet concludes with the same trust he began with, and jeers at the blindness which could inquire. But our sphinx is so wise as to put no riddle that can be answered. It is a great presumption to answer conclusively a question which any sincerity has put. The wise answer no questions, — nor do they ask them. She silences his jeers with the conviction that she is the eye-beam of his eye. Our proper eye never quails before an answer. To rest in a reply, as a response of the oracle, that is error; but to suspect time's reply, because we would not degrade one of God's meanings to be intelligible to us, that is wisdom. We shall never arrive at his meaning, but it will ceaselessly arrive to us. The truth we seek with ardor and devotion will not reward us with a cheap acquisition. We run unhesitatingly in our career, not fearing to pass any goal of truth in our haste. We career toward her eternally. A truth rested in stands for all the vice of an age, and revolution comes kindly to restore health.

16. The cunning Sphinx, who had been hushed into stony silence and repose in us, arouses herself and detects a mystery in all things, — in infancy, the moon, fire, flowers, sea, mountain, — and,

(17) in the spirit of the old fable, declares proudly, —

> "Who telleth one of my meanings
> Is master of all I am."

When some Œdipus has solved one of her enigmas, she will go dash her head against a rock.

You may find this as enigmatical as the Sphinx's riddle. Indeed, I doubt if she could solve it herself.

March 11. *Thursday.* Every man understands why a fool sings.

March 13. *Saturday.* There is a sort of homely truth and naturalness in some books, which is very rare to find, and yet looks quite cheap. There may be nothing lofty in the sentiment, or polished in the expression, but it is careless, countrified talk. The scholar rarely writes as well as the farmer talks. Homeliness is a great merit in a book; it is next to beauty and a high art. Some have this merit only. A few homely expressions redeem them. Rusticity is pastoral, but affectation merely civil. The scholar does not make his most familiar experience come gracefully to the aid of his expression, and hence, though he live in it, his books contain no tolerable pictures of the country and simple life. Very few men can speak of Nature with any truth. They confer no favor; they do not speak a good word for her. Most cry better than they speak. You can get more nature out of them by pinching than by addressing them. It is naturalness, and not simply good nature, that interests. I like better the surliness with which the woodchopper speaks of his woods, handling them as indifferently as his axe, than the mealy-mouthed enthusiasm of the lover of nature. Better that the primrose by the river's brim be a yellow prim-

rose and nothing more, than the victim of his bouquet or herbarium, to shine with the flickering dull light of his imagination, and not the golden gleam of a star.

Aubrey relates of Thomas Fuller that his was "a very working head, in so much, that walking and meditating before dinner, he would eat up a penny loaf, not knowing that he did it. His natural memory was very great, to which he added the art of memory. He would repeat to you forwards and backwards all the signs from Ludgate to Charing-cross." These are very good and wholesome facts to know of a man, as copious as some modern volumes.

He also says of Mr. John Hales, that, "he loved Canarie" and was buried "under an altar monument of black marble . . . with a too long epitaph;" of Edmund Halley, that he "at sixteen could make a dial, and then he said he thought himself a brave fellow;" of William Holder, who wrote a book upon his curing one Popham, who was deaf and dumb, "He was beholding to no author; did only consult with nature." For the most part an author but consults with all who have written before upon any subject, and his book is but the advice of so many. But a true book will never have been forestalled, but the topic itself will be new, and, by consulting with nature, it will consult not only with those who have gone before, but with those who may come after. There is always room and occasion enough for a true book on any subject, as there is room for more light the brightest day, and more rays will not interfere with the first.[1]

[1] [*Week*, pp. 111, 112; Riv. 138–140.]

How alone must our life be lived! We dwell on the seashore, and none between us and the sea. Men are my merry companions, my fellow-pilgrims, who beguile the way but leave me at the first turn in the road, for none are travelling *one* road so far as myself.

Each one marches in the van. The weakest child is exposed to the fates henceforth as barely as its parents. Parents and relations but entertain the youth; they cannot stand between him and his destiny. This is the one bare side of every man. There is no fence; it is clear before him to the bounds of space.

What is fame to a living man? If he live aright, the sound of no man's voice will resound through the aisles of his secluded life. His life is a hallowed silence, a fane. The loudest sounds have to thank my little ear that they are heard.

March 15. When I have access to a man's barrel of sermons, which were written from week to week, as his life lapsed, though I now know him to live cheerfully and bravely enough, still I cannot conceive what interval there was for laughter and smiles in the midst of so much sadness. Almost in proportion to the sincerity and earnestness of the life will be the sadness of the record. When I reflect that twice a week for so many years he pondered and preached such a sermon, I think he must have been a splenetic and melancholy man, and wonder if his food digested well. It seems as if the fruit of virtue was never a careless happiness.

A great cheerfulness have all great wits possessed,

almost a prophane levity to such as understood them not, but their religion had the broader basis in proportion as it was less prominent. The religion I love is very laic. The clergy are as diseased, and as much possessed with a devil, as the reformers. They make their topic as offensive as the politician, for our religion is as unpublic and incommunicable as our poetical vein, and to be approached with as much love and tenderness.

March 17. *Wednesday.* The stars go up and down before my only eye. Seasons come round to me alone. I cannot lean so hard on any arm as on a sunbeam. So solid men are not to my sincerity as is the shimmer of the fields.

March 19. *Friday.* No true and brave person will be content to live on such a footing with his fellow and himself as the laws of every household now require. The house is the very haunt and lair of our vice. I am impatient to withdraw myself from under its roof as an unclean spot. There is no circulation there; it is full of stagnant and mephitic vapors.

March 20. Even the wisest and best are apt to use their lives as the occasion to do something else in than to live greatly. But we should hang as fondly over this work as the finishing and embellishment of a poem.

It is a great relief when for a few moments in the day we can retire to our chamber and be completely true to

ourselves. It leavens the rest of our hours. In that moment I will be nakedly as vicious as I am; this false life of mine shall have a being at length.

March 21. *Sunday.* To be associated with others by my friend's generosity when he bestows a gift is an additional favor to be grateful for.

March 27. *Saturday.* Magnanimity, though it look expensive for a short course, is always economy in the long run. Be generous in your poverty, if you would be rich. To make up a great action there are no subordinate mean ones. We can never afford to postpone a true life to-day to any future and anticipated nobleness. We think if by tight economy we can manage to arrive at independence, then indeed we will begin to be generous without stay. We sacrifice all nobleness to a little present meanness. If a man charges you eight hundred pay him eight hundred and fifty, and it will leave a clean edge to the sum. It will be like nature, overflowing and rounded like the bank of a river, not close and precise like a drain or ditch.

It is always a short step to peace — of mind.

Under this line there is or has been life; as, when I see the mole's raised gallery in the meadow, I know that he has passed underneath.

I must not lose any of my freedom by being a farmer and landholder. Most who enter on any profession

are doomed men. The world might as well sing a dirge over them forthwith. The farmer's muscles are rigid. He can do one thing long, not many well. His pace seems determined henceforth; he never quickens it. A very rigid Nemesis is his fate. When the right wind blows or a star calls, I can leave this arable and grass ground, without making a will or settling my estate. I would buy a farm as freely as a silken streamer. Let me not think my front windows must face east henceforth because a particular hill slopes that way. My life must undulate still. I will not feel that my wings are clipped when once I have settled on ground which the law calls my own, but find new pinions grown to the old, and talaria to my feet beside.

March 30. *Tuesday.* I find my life growing slovenly when it does not exercise a constant supervision over itself. Its duds accumulate. Next to having lived a day well is a clear and calm overlooking of all our days.

FRIENDSHIP

Now we are partners in such legal trade,
We 'll look to the beginnings, not the ends,
Nor to pay-day, knowing true wealth is made
For current stock and not for dividends.

I am amused when I read how Ben Jonson engaged that the ridiculous masks with which the royal family and nobility were to be entertained should be "grounded upon antiquity and solid learning."[1]

[1] [*Week*, p. 108; Riv. 134.]

April 1. ON THE SUN COMING OUT IN THE AFTERNOON

Methinks all things have travelled since you shined,
But only Time, and clouds, Time's team, have moved;
Again foul weather shall not change my mind,
But in the shade I will believe what in the sun I loved.

In reading a work on agriculture, I skip the author's moral reflections, and the words "Providence" and "He" scattered along the page, to come at the profitable level of what he has to say. There is no science in men's religion; it does not teach me so much as the report of the committee on swine. My author shows he has dealt in corn and turnips and can worship God with the hoe and spade, but spare me his morality.[1]

April 3. Friends will not only live in harmony, but in melody.[2]

April 4. *Sunday.* The rattling of the tea-kettle below stairs reminds me of the cow-bells I used to hear when berrying in the Great Fields many years ago, sounding distant and deep amid the birches. That cheap piece of tinkling brass which the farmer hangs about his cow's neck has been more to me than the tons of metal which are swung in the belfry.

They who prepare my evening meal below
Carelessly hit the kettle as they go,
With tongs or shovel,
And, ringing round and round,

[1] [*Week*, p. 79; Riv. 98.] [2] [*Week*, p. 283; Riv. 351.]

Out of this hovel
It makes an Eastern temple by the sound.

At first I thought a cow-bell, right at hand
'Mid birches, sounded o'er the open land,
Where I plucked flowers
Many years ago,
Speeding midsummer hours
With such secure delight they hardly seemed to flow.

April 5. This long series of desultory mornings does not tarnish the brightness of the prospective days. Surely faith is not dead. Wood, water, earth, air are essentially what they were; only society has degenerated. This lament for a golden age is only a lament for golden men.

I only ask a clean seat. I will build my lodge on the southern slope of some hill, and take there the life the gods send me. Will it not be employment enough to accept gratefully all that is yielded me between sun and sun?[1] Even the fox digs his own burrow. If my jacket and trousers, my boots and shoes, are fit to worship God in, they will do. Won't they, Deacon Spaulding?[2]

April 7. Wednesday. My life will wait for nobody, but is being matured still irresistibly while I go about the streets and chaffer with this man and that to secure it a living. It will cut its own channel, like the mountain stream, which by the longest ridges and by level

[1] [See p. 299.] [2] [*Walden*, p. 25; Riv. 39.]

prairies is not kept from the sea finally. So flows a man's life, and will reach the sea water, if not by an earthy channel, yet in dew and rain, overleaping all barriers, with rainbows to announce its victory. It can wind as cunningly and unerringly as water that seeks its level; and shall I complain if the gods make it meander? This staying to buy me a farm is as if the Mississippi should stop to chaffer with a clamshell.

What have I to do with plows? I cut another furrow than you see. Where the off ox treads, there is it not, it is farther off; where the nigh ox walks, it will not be, it is nigher still. If corn fails, my crop fails not. What of drought? What of rain? Is not my sand well clayed, my peat well sanded? Is it not underdrained and watered? [1]

My ground is high,
But 't is not dry,
What you call dew
Comes filtering through;
Though in the sky,
It still is nigh;
Its soil is blue
And virgin too.

If from your price ye will not swerve,
Why, then I 'll think the gods reserve
A greater bargain there above,
Out of their sup'rabundant love

[1] [*Week*, p. 54; Riv. 67, 68.]

Have meantime better for me cared,
And so will get my stock prepared,
Plows of new pattern, hoes the same,
Designed a different soil to tame,
And sow my seed broadcast in air,
Certain to reap my harvest there.

April 8. Friends are the ancient and honorable of the earth. The oldest men did not begin friendship. It is older than Hindostan and the Chinese Empire. How long has it been cultivated, and is still the staple article! It is a divine league struck forever. Warm, serene days only bring it out to the surface. There is a friendliness between the sun and the earth in pleasant weather; the gray content of the land is its color.

You can tell what another's suspicions are by what you feel forced to become. You will wear a new character, like a strange habit, in their presence.

April 9. *Friday.* It would not be hard for some quiet brave man to leap into the saddle to-day and eclipse Napoleon's career by a grander, — show men at length the meaning of war. One reproaches himself with supineness, that he too has sat quiet in his chamber, and not treated the world to the sound of the trumpet; that the indignation which has so long rankled in his breast does not take to horse and to the field. The bravest warrior will have to fight his battles in his dreams, and no earthly war note can arouse him. There are who would not run with Leonidas. Only the third-rate Napoleons

and Alexanders does history tell of. The brave man does not mind the call of the trumpet nor hear the idle clashing of swords without, for the infinite din within. War is but a training, compared with the active service of his peace. Is he not at war? Does he not resist the ocean swell within him, and walk as gently as the summer's sea? Would you have him parade in uniform, and manœuvre men, whose equanimity is his uniform and who is himself manœuvred?

The times have no heart. The true reform can be undertaken any morning before unbarring our doors. It calls no convention. I can do two thirds the reform of the world myself. When two neighbors begin to eat corn bread, who before ate wheat, then the gods smile from ear to ear, for it is very pleasant to them. When an individual takes a sincere step, then all the gods attend, and his single deed is sweet.[1]

April 10. *Saturday.* I don't know but we should make life all too tame if we had our own way, and should miss these impulses in a happier time.

How much virtue there is in simply seeing! We may almost say that the hero has striven in vain for his preeminency, if the student oversees him. The woman who sits in the house and *sees* is a match for a stirring captain. Those still, piercing eyes, as faithfully exercised on their talent, will keep her even with Alexander or Shakespeare. They may go to Asia with parade, or to

[1] [See *Week*, p. 131; Riv. 163.]

fairyland, but not beyond her ray. We are as much as we see. Faith is sight and knowledge. The hands only serve the eyes. The farthest blue streak in the horizon I can see, I may reach before many sunsets. What I saw alters not; in my night, when I wander, it is still steadfast as the star which the sailor steers by.

Whoever has had one thought quite lonely, and could contentedly digest that in solitude, knowing that none could accept it, may rise to the height of humanity, and overlook all living men as from a pinnacle.

Speech never made man master of men, but the eloquently refraining from it.

April 11. *Sunday.* A greater baldness my life seeks, as the crest of some bare hill, which towns and cities do not afford. I want a directer relation with the sun.

FRIENDSHIP'S STEADFASTNESS

True friendship is so firm a league
That's maintenance falls into the even tenor
Of our lives, and is no tie,
But the continuance of our life's thread.

If I would safely keep this new-got pelf,
I have no care henceforth but watch myself,
For lo! it goes untended from my sight,
Waxes and wanes secure with the safe star of night.

See with what liberal step it makes its way,
As we could well afford to let it stray

Throughout the universe, with the sun and moon,
Which would dissolve allegiance as soon.

Shall I concern myself for fickleness,
And undertake to make my friends more sure,
When the great gods out of sheer kindliness,
Gave me this office for a sinecure?

Death cannot come too soon
Where it can come at all,
But always is too late
Unless the fates it call.

April 15. *Thursday.* The gods are of no sect; they side with no man. When I imagine that Nature inclined rather to some few earnest and faithful souls, and specially existed for them, I go to see an obscure individual who lives under the hill, letting both gods and men alone, and find that strawberries and tomatoes grow for him too in his garden there, and the sun lodges kindly under his hillside, and am compelled to acknowledge the unbribable charity of the gods.

Any simple, unquestioned mode of life is alluring to men. The man who picks peas steadily for a living is more than respectable. He is to be envied by his neighbors.

April 16. I have been inspecting my neighbors' farms to-day and chaffering with the landholders, and I must confess I am startled to find everywhere the old system

of things so grim and assured. Wherever I go the farms are run out, and there they lie, and the youth must buy old land and bring it to. Everywhere the relentless opponents of reform are a few old maids and bachelors, who sit round the kitchen fire, listening to the singing of the tea-kettle and munching cheese-rinds.[1]

April 18. *Sunday.* We need pine for no office for the sake of a certain culture, for all valuable experience lies in the way of a man's duty. My necessities of late have compelled me to study Nature as she is related to the farmer, — as she simply satisfies a want of the body. Some interests have got a footing on the earth which I have not made sufficient allowance for. That which built these barns and cleared the land thus had some valor.[2]

We take little steps, and venture small stakes, as if our actions were very fatal and irretrievable. There is no swing to our deeds. But our life is only a retired valley where we rest on our packs awhile. Between us and our end there is room for any delay. It is not a short and easy southern way, but we must go over snow-capped mountains to reach the sun.

April 20. You can't beat down your virtue; so much goodness it must have.

When a room is furnished, comfort is not furnished.

Great thoughts hallow any labor. To-day I earned

[1] [*Week*, p. 131; Riv. 163.] [2] [*Week*, p. 129; Riv. 161.]

seventy-five cents heaving manure out of a pen, and made a good bargain of it. If the ditcher muses the while how he may live uprightly, the ditching spade and turf knife may be engraved on the coat-of-arms of his posterity.

There are certain current expressions and blasphemous moods of viewing things, as when we say "he is doing a good business," more prophane than cursing and swearing. There is death and sin in such words. Let not the children hear them.

April 22. Thursday. There are two classes of authors: the one write the history of their times, the other their biography.

April 23. Friday. Any greatness is not to be mistaken. Who shall cavil at it? It stands once for all on a level with the heroes of history. It is not to be patronized. It goes alone.

When I hear music, I flutter, and am the scene of life, as a fleet of merchantmen when the wind rises.

April 24. Music is the sound of the circulation in nature's veins. It is the flux which melts nature. Men dance to it, glasses ring and vibrate, and the fields seem to undulate. The healthy ear always hears it, nearer or more remote.

It has been a cloudy, drizzling day, with occasional

brightenings in the mist, when the trill of the tree sparrow seemed to be ushering in sunny hours.[1]

April 25. A momentous silence reigns always in the woods, and their meaning seems just ripening into expression. But alas! they make no haste. The rush sparrow,[2] Nature's minstrel of serene hours, sings of an immense leisure and duration.

When I hear a robin sing at sunset, I cannot help contrasting the equanimity of Nature with the bustle and impatience of man. We return from the lyceum and caucus with such stir and excitement, as if a crisis were at hand; but no natural scene or sound sympathizes with us, for Nature is always silent and unpretending as at the break of day. She but rubs her eyelids.

I am struck with the pleasing friendships and unanimities of nature in the woods, as when the moss on the trees takes the form of their leaves.

There is all of civilized life in the woods. Their wildest scenes have an air of domesticity and homeliness, and when the flicker's cackle is heard in the clearings, the musing hunter is reminded that civilization has imported nothing into them.[3] The ball-room is represented

[1] [*Week*, pp. 318, 319; Riv. 395. Tree sparrow=chipping sparrow? The "hair-bird" of *Week*, p. 317 (Riv. 393), is called tree sparrow in the commonplace-book referred to on p. 438.]

[2] [Field sparrow, Nuttall's *Fringilla juncorum*. Nuttall gives both field sparrow and rush sparrow as its vernacular names.]

[3] [*Week*, p. 336; Riv. 416.]

by the catkins of the alder at this season, which hang gracefully like a lady's ear-drops.

All the discoveries of science are equally true in their deepest recesses; nature there, too, obeys the same laws. Fair weather and foul concern the little red bug upon a pine stump; for him the wind goes round the right way and the sun breaks through the clouds.[1]

April 26. *Monday.* At R. W. E.'s.

The charm of the Indian to me is that he stands free and unconstrained in Nature, is her inhabitant and not her guest, and wears her easily and gracefully. But the civilized man has the habits of the house. His house is a prison, in which he finds himself oppressed and confined, not sheltered and protected. He walks as if he sustained the roof; he carries his arms as if the walls would fall in and crush him, and his feet remember the cellar beneath. His muscles are never relaxed. It is rare that he overcomes the house, and learns to sit at home in it, and roof and floor and walls support themselves, as the sky and trees and earth.

It is a great art to saunter.

April 27. It is only by a sort of voluntary blindness, and omitting to see, that we know ourselves, as when we see stars with the side of the eye. The nearest approach to discovering what we are is in dreams. It is as hard to see one's self as to look backwards without turning round. And foolish are they that look in glasses with that intent.

[1] [*Week*, p. 336; Riv. 416.]

The porters have a hard time, but not so hard as he that carries his own shoulders. That beats the Smyrna Turks. Some men's broad shoulders are load enough. Even a light frame can stand under a great burden, if it does not have to support itself. Virtue is buoyant and elastic; it stands without effort and does not feel gravity; but sin plods and shuffles. Newton needed not to wait for an apple to fall to discover the attraction of gravitation; it was implied in the fall of man.

April 28. *Wednesday.* We falsely attribute to men a determined character; putting together all their yesterdays and averaging them, we presume we know them. Pity the man who has a character to support. It is worse than a large family. He is silent poor indeed. But in fact character is never explored, nor does it get developed in time, but eternity is its development, time its envelope. In view of this distinction, a sort of divine politeness and heavenly good breeding suggests itself, to address always the enveloped character of a man. I approach a great nature with infinite expectation and uncertainty, not knowing what I may meet. It lies as broad and unexplored before me as a scraggy hillside or pasture. I may hear a fox bark, or a partridge drum, or some bird new to these localities may fly up. It lies out there as old, and yet as new. The aspect of the woods varies every day, what with their growth and the changes of the seasons and the influence of the elements, so that the eye of the forester never twice rests upon the same prospect. Much more does a character show newly and variedly, if directly seen. It is the highest

compliment to suppose that in the intervals of conversation your companion has expanded and grown. It may be a deference which he will not understand, but the nature which underlies him will understand it, and your influence will be shed as finely on him as the dust in the sun settles on our clothes. By such politeness we may educate one another to some purpose. So have I felt myself educated sometimes; I am expanded and enlarged.

April 29. Birds and quadrupeds pass freely through nature, without prop or stilt. But man very naturally carries a stick in his hand, seeking to ally himself by many points to nature, as a warrior stands by his horse's side with his hand on his mane. We walk the gracefuler for a cane, as the juggler uses a leaded pole to balance him when he dances on a slack wire.

Better a monosyllabic life than a ragged and muttered one; let its report be short and round like a rifle, so that it may hear its own echo in the surrounding silence.

April 30. Where shall we look for standard English but to the words of any man who has a depth of feeling in him? Not in any smooth and leisurely essay. From the gentlemanly windows of the country-seat no sincere eyes are directed upon nature, but from the peasant's horn windows a true glance and greeting occasionally. "For summer being ended, all things," said the Pilgrim, "stood in appearance with a weather-beaten face,

and the whole country full of woods and thickets represented a wild and savage hue." Compare this with the agricultural report.

May 1. *Saturday.* Life in gardens and parlors is unpalatable to me. It wants rudeness and necessity to give it relish. I would at least strike my spade into the earth with as good will as the woodpecker his bill into a tree.[1]

May 2. WACHUSETT[2]

Especial I remember thee,
Wachusett, who like me
Standest alone without society.
Thy far blue eye,
A remnant of the sky,
Seen through the clearing or the gorge,
Or from the windows of the forge,
Doth leaven all it passes by.
Nothing is true
But stands 'tween me and you,
Thou western pioneer,
Who know'st not shame nor fear,
By venturous spirit driven
Under the eaves of heaven;
And canst expand thee there,
And breathe enough of air?

[1] [*Week*, p. 54 ; Riv. 67.]

[2] [In *Excursions*, p. 135 (Riv. 165), these lines are printed as part of a poem beginning, "With frontier strength ye stand your ground." The poem appears also, in extended form, in *Week*, pp. 170–173; Riv. 212–215.]

Upholding heaven, holding down earth,
Thy pastime from thy birth,
Not steadied by the one, nor leaning on the other;
May I approve myself thy worthy brother!

May 3. *Monday.* We are all pilots of the most intricate Bahama channels. Beauty may be the sky overhead, but Duty is the water underneath. When I see a man with serene countenance in the sunshine of summer, drinking in peace in the garden or parlor, it looks like a great inward leisure that he enjoys; but in reality he sails on no summer's sea, but this steady sailing comes of a heavy hand on the tiller. We do not attend to larks and bluebirds so leisurely but that conscience is as erect as the attitude of the listener. The man of principle gets never a holiday. Our true character silently underlies all our words and actions, as the granite underlies the other strata. Its steady pulse does not cease for any deed of ours, as the sap is still ascending in the stalk of the fairest flower.

May 6. *Thursday.* The fickle person is he that does not know what is true or right absolutely, — who has not an ancient wisdom for a lifetime, but a new prudence for every hour. We must sail by a sort of dead reckoning on this course of life, not speak any vessel nor spy any headland, but, in spite of all phenomena, come steadily to port at last. In general we must have a catholic and universal wisdom, wiser than any particular, and be prudent enough to defer to it always. We are literally wiser than we know. Men do not fail

for want of knowledge, but for want of prudence to give wisdom the preference.[1] These low weathercocks on barns and fences show not which way the general and steady current of the wind sets, — which brings fair weather or foul, — but the vane on the steeple, high up in another stratum of atmosphere, tells that. What we need to know in any case is very simple.[2] I shall not mistake the direction of my life; if I but know the high land and the main, — on this side the Cordilleras, on that the Pacific, — I shall know how to run. If a ridge intervene, I have but to seek, or make, a gap to the sea.

May 9. *Sunday.* The pine stands in the woods like an Indian, — untamed, with a fantastic wildness about it, even in the clearings. If an Indian warrior were well painted, with pines in the background, he would seem to blend with the trees, and make a harmonious expression. The pitch pines are the ghosts of Philip and Massasoit. The white pine has the smoother features of the squaw.

The poet speaks only those thoughts that come unbidden, like the wind that stirs the trees, and men cannot help but listen. He is not listened to, but heard. The weathercock might as well dally with the wind as a man pretend to resist eloquence. The breath that inspires the poet has traversed a whole Campagna, and this new climate here indicates that other latitudes are chilled or heated.

Speak to men as to gods and you will not be insincere.

[1] [*Week*, p. 132; Riv. 164.] [2] [*Week*, p. 132; Riv. 164.]

WESTWARD, HO!

The needles of the pine
All to the west incline.[1]

THE ECHO OF THE SABBATH BELL HEARD IN THE WOODS[2]

Dong, sounds the brass in the east,
As if for a civic feast,
But I like that sound the best
Out of the fluttering west.

The steeple rings a knell,
But the fairies' silvery bell
Is the voice of that gentle folk,
Or else the horizon that spoke.

Its metal is not of brass,
But air, and water, and glass,
And under a cloud it is swung,
And by the wind is rung,
With a slim silver tongue.

When the steeple tolls the noon,
It soundeth not so soon,
Yet it rings an earlier hour,
And the sun has not reached its tower.

May 10. *Monday.* A good warning to the restless

[1] [*Excursions*, p. 133 ; Riv. 163.]

[2] [This poem appears in *Week*, p. 50 (Riv. 62), with some variations and without title.]

tourists of these days is contained in the last verses of Claudian's "Old Man of Verona."

> "Erret, et extremos alter scrutetur Iberos.
> Plus habet hic vitae, plus habet ille viae." [1]

May 23. *Sunday.* Barn. — The distant woods are but the tassels of my eye.

Books are to be attended to as new sounds merely. Most would be put to a sore trial if the reader should assume the attitude of a listener. They are but a new note in the forest. To our lonely, sober thought the earth is a wild unexplored. Wildness as of the jay and muskrat reigns over the great part of nature. The oven-bird and plover are heard in the horizon. Here is a new book of heroes, come to me like the note of the chewink from over the fen, only over a deeper and wider fen. The pines are unrelenting sifters of thought; nothing petty leaks through them. Let me put my ear close, and hear the sough of this book, that I may know if any inspiration yet haunts it. There is always a later edition of every book than the printer wots of, no matter how recently it was published. All nature is a new impression every instant.

The aspects of the most simple object are as various as the aspects of the most compound. Observe the same sheet of water from different eminences. When I have travelled a few miles I do not recognize the profile of the hills of my native village.

May 27. *Thursday.* I sit in my boat on Walden, playing the flute this evening, and see the perch, which I

[1] [*Walden*, p. 354; Riv. 496.]

seem to have charmed, hovering around me, and the moon travelling over the bottom, which is strewn with the wrecks of the forest, and feel that nothing but the wildest imagination can conceive of the manner of life we are living. Nature is a wizard. The Concord nights are stranger than the Arabian nights.

We not only want elbow-room, but eye-room in this gray air which shrouds all the fields. Sometimes my eyes see over the county road by daylight to the tops of yonder birches on the hill, as at others by moonlight.

Heaven lies above, because the air is deep.

In all my life hitherto I have left nothing behind.

May 31. *Monday.* That title, "The Laws of Menu[1] with the Gloss of Culluca," comes to me with such a volume of sound as if it had swept unobstructed over the plains of Hindostan; and when my eye rests on yonder birches, or the sun in the water, or the shadows of the trees, it seems to signify the laws of them all. They are the laws of you and me, a fragrance wafted down from those old times, and no more to be refuted than the wind.

When my imagination travels eastward and backward to those remote years of the gods, I seem to draw near to the habitation of the morning, and the dawn at length has a place. I remember the book as an hour before sunrise.

We are height and depth both, a calm sea at the foot of a promontory. Do we not overlook our own depths?

[1] [See *Week*, p. 154; Riv. 192.]

June 1. To have seen a man out of the East or West is sufficient to establish their reality and locality. I have seen a Mr. Wattles to-day, from Vermont, and now know where that is and that it is; a reformer, with two soldier's eyes and shoulders, who began to belabor the world at ten years, a ragged mountain boy, as fifer of a company, with set purpose to remould it from those first years.

The great person never wants an opportunity to be great, but makes occasion for all about him.

June 2. *Wednesday.* I am brought into the near neighborhood and am become a silent observer of the moon's paces to-night, by means of a glass, while the frogs are peeping all around me on the earth, and the sound of the accordion seems to come from some bright saloon yonder. I am sure the moon floats in a human atmosphere. It is but a distant scene of the world's drama. It is a wide theatre the gods have given us, and our actions must befit it. More sea and land, mountain and valley, here is, — a further West, a freshness and wildness in reserve when all the land shall be cleared.

I see three little lakes between the hills near its edge, reflecting the sun's rays. The light glimmers as on the water in a tumbler. So far off do the laws of reflection hold. I seem to see the ribs of the creature. This is the aspect of their day, its outside, — their heaven above their heads, towards which they breathe their prayers. So much is between me and them. It is noon there, perchance, and ships are at anchor in the havens or

sailing on the seas, and there is a din in the streets, and in this light or that shade some leisurely soul contemplates.

But now dor-bugs fly over its disk and bring me back to earth and night.

June 7. Monday. The inhabitants of those Eastern plains seem to possess a natural and hereditary right to be conservative and magnify forms and traditions. "Immemorial custom is transcendent law," says Menu. That is, it was the custom of gods before men used it. The fault of our New England custom is that it is memorial. What is morality but immemorial custom? It is not manner but character, and the conservative conscience sustains it.[1]

We are accustomed to exaggerate the immobility and stagnation of those eras, as of the waters which levelled the steppes; but those slow revolving "years of the gods" were as rapid to all the needs of virtue as these bustling and hasty seasons. Man stands to revere, he kneels to pray. Methinks history will have to be tried by new tests to show what centuries were rapid and what slow. Corn grows in the night.[2] Will this bustling era detain the future reader longer? Will the earth seem to have conversed more with the heavens during these times? Who is writing better Vedas? How science and art spread and flourished, how trivial conveniences were multiplied, that which is the gossip of the world is not recorded in them; and if they are left out of our scripture, too, what will remain?

[1] [*Week*, p. 140; Riv. 174, 175.] [See pp. 124 and 174.]

Since the Battle of Bunker Hill we think the world has *not* been at a standstill.

When I remember the treachery of memory and the manifold accidents to which tradition is liable, how soon the vista of the past closes behind, — as near as night's crescent to the setting day, — and the dazzling brightness of noon is reduced to the faint glimmer of the evening star, I feel as if it were by a rare indulgence of the fates that any traces of the past are left us, — that my ears which do not hear across the interval over which a crow caws should chance to hear this far-travelled sound. With how little coöperation of the societies, after all, is the past remembered!

I know of no book which comes to us with grander pretensions than the "Laws of Menu;" and this immense presumption is so impersonal and sincere that it is never offensive or ridiculous. Observe the modes in which modern literature is advertised, and then consider this Hindoo prospectus. Think what a reading public it addresses, what criticism it expects. What wonder if the times were not ripe for it?[1]

June 8. Having but one chair, I am obliged to receive my visitors standing, and, now I think of it, those old sages and heroes must always have met erectly.

July 10 *to* 12. This town, too, lies out under the sky, a port of entry and departure for souls to and from heaven.[2]

[1] [*Week*, p. 155; Riv. 193.] [2] [*Week*, p. 12; Riv. 15.]

A slight sound at evening lifts me up by the ears, and makes life seem inexpressibly serene and grand. It may be in Uranus, or it may be in the shutter. It is the original sound of which all literature is but the echo. It makes all fear superfluous. Bravery comes from further than the sources of fear.

Aug. 1. *Sunday.* I never met a man who cast a free and healthy glance over life, but the best live in a sort of Sabbath light, a Jewish gloom. The best thought is not only without sombreness, but even without morality. The universe lies outspread in floods of white light to it. The moral aspect of nature is a jaundice reflected from man. To the innocent there are no cherubim nor angels. Occasionally we rise above the necessity of virtue into an unchangeable morning light, in which we have not to choose in a dilemma between right and wrong, but simply to live right on and breathe the circumambient air.[1] There is no name for this life unless it be the very vitality of *vita*. Silent is the preacher about this, and silent must ever be, for he who knows it will not preach.

Aug. 4. *Wednesday.* My pen is a lever which, in proportion as the near end stirs me further within, the further end reaches to a greater depth in the reader.

Nawshawtuct. — Far in the east I read *Nature's Corn Law Rhymes*. Here, in sight of Wachusett and these rivers and woods, my mind goes singing to itself of other themes than taxation. The rush sparrow sings

[1] [*Week*, p. 394 ; Riv. 486.]

still unintelligible, as from beyond a depth in me which I have not fathomed, where my future lies folded up. I hear several faint notes, quite outside me, which populate the waste.

This is such fresh and flowing weather, as if the waves of the morning had subsided over the day.

Aug. 6. If I am well, then I see well. The bulletins of health are twirled along my visual rays, like pasteboards on a kite string.

I cannot read a sentence in the book of the Hindoos without being elevated as upon the table-land of the Ghauts. It has such a rhythm as the winds of the desert, such a tide as the Ganges, and seems as superior to criticism as the Himmaleh Mounts. Even at this late hour, unworn by time, with a native and inherent dignity it wears the English dress as indifferently as the Sanscrit. The great tone of the book is of such fibre and such severe tension that no time nor accident can relax it.[1] The great thought is never found in a mean dress, but is of virtue to ennoble any language. Let it issue from the lips of the Wolofs, or from the forum of Rome, the nine Muses will seem to have been purveyors for it. Its education is always liberal; it has all the graces of oratory and of poetry. The lofty tone which is its indispensable breath is grace to the eye and music to the ear. It can endow a college.[2]

So supremely religious a book imposes with authority on the latest age. The very simplicity of style of the

[1] [*Week*, p. 155 ; Riv. 193.] [2] [*Week*, p. 109 ; Riv. 136.]

ancient lawgiver, implying all in the omission of all, proves an habitual elevation of thought, which the multiplied glosses of later days strive in vain to slope up to. The whole book by noble gestures and inclinations seems to render words unnecessary. The abbreviated sentence points to the thing for explanation. As the sublimest thought is most faithfully printed in the face, and needs the fewest interpreting words. The page nods toward the fact and is silent.

As I walk across the yard from the barn to the house through the fog, with a lamp in my hand, I am reminded of the Merrimack nights, and seem to see the sod between tent-ropes. The trees, seen dimly through the mist, suggest things which do not at all belong to the past, but are peculiar to my fresh New England life. It is as novel as green peas. The dew hangs everywhere upon the grass, and I breathe the rich, damp air in slices.

Aug. 7. *Saturday.* The impression which those sublime sentences made on me last night has awakened me before any cockcrowing. Their influence lingers around me like a fragrance, or as the fog hangs over the earth late into the day.

The very locusts and crickets of a summer day are but later or older glosses on the Dherma Sástra of the Hindoos, a continuation of the sacred code.[1]

Aug. 9. It is vain to try to write unless you feel strong in the knees.

[1] [*Week*, p. 157; Riv. 195, 196.]

Any book of great authority and genius seems to our imagination to permeate and pervade all space. Its spirit, like a more subtle ether, sweeps along with the prevailing winds of the country. Its influence conveys a new gloss to the meadows and the depths of the wood, and bathes the huckleberries on the hills, as sometimes a new influence in the sky washes in waves over the fields and seems to break on some invisible beach in the air. All things confirm it. It spends the mornings and the evenings.[1]

Everywhere the speech of Menu demands the widest apprehension and proceeds from the loftiest plateau of the soul. It is spoken unbendingly to its own level, and does not imply any contemporaneous speaker.

I read history as little critically as I consider the landscape, and am more interested in the atmospheric tints and various lights and shades which the intervening spaces create than in its groundwork and composition. It is the morning now turned evening and seen in the west, — the same sun, but a new light and atmosphere. Its beauty is like the sunset; not a fresco painting on a wall, flat and bounded, but atmospheric and roving, or free. But, in reality, history fluctuates as the face of the landscape from morning to evening. What is of moment in it is its hue and color. Time hides no treasures; we want not its *then*, but its *now*. We do not complain that the mountains in the horizon are blue and indistinct; they are the more like the heavens.

[1] [*Week*, p. 157; Riv. 195.]

Of what moment are facts that can be lost, — which need to be commemorated? The monument of death will outlast the memory of the dead. The Pyramids do not tell the tale confided to them. The living fact commemorates itself. Why look in the dark for light? Look in the light rather. Strictly speaking, the Societies have not recovered one fact from oblivion, but they themselves are instead of the fact that is lost. The researcher is more memorable than the researched. The crowd stood admiring the mist and the dim outline of the trees seen through it, and when one of their number advanced to explore the phenomenon, with fresh admiration all eyes were turned on his dimly retreating figure. Critical acumen is exerted in vain to uncover the past; the *past* cannot be *presented;* we cannot know what we are not. But one veil hangs over past, present, and future, and it is the province of the historian to find out, not what was, but what is. Where a battle has been fought, you will find nothing but the bones of men and beasts; where a battle is being fought, there are hearts beating. We will sit on a mound and muse, and not try to make these skeletons stand on their legs again. Does Nature remember, think you, that they *were* men, or not rather that they *are* bones?

Ancient history has an air of antiquity. It should be more modern. It is written as if the spectator should be thinking of the back side of the picture on the wall, as if the author expected the dead would be his readers, and wished to detail to them their own experience. Men seem anxious to accomplish an orderly retreat through the centuries, earnestly rebuilding the works

behind, as they are battered down by the incroachments of time; but while they loiter, they and their works both fall a prey to the enemy.

Biography is liable to the same objection; it should be autobiography. Let us not leave ourselves empty that, so vexing our bowels, we may go abroad and be somebody else to explain him. If I am not I, who will be? As if it were to dispense justice to all. But the time has not come for that.[1]

Aug. 12. We take pleasure in beholding the form of a mountain in the horizon, as if by retiring to this distance we had then first conquered it by our vision, and were made privy to the design of the architect; so when we behold the shadow of our earth on the moon's disk. When we climb a mountain and observe the lesser irregularities, we do not give credit to the comprehensive and general intelligence which shaped them; but when we see the outline in the horizon, we confess that the hand which moulded those opposite slopes, making one balance the other, worked round a deep centre, and was privy to the plan of the universe. The smallest of nature's works fits the farthest and widest view, as if it had been referred in its bearings to every point in space.[2] It harmonizes with the horizon line and the orbits of the planets.

Aug. 13. *Friday.* I have been in the swamp by Charles Miles's this afternoon, and found it so bosky and sylvan that Art would never have freedom or cour-

[1] [*Week*, pp. 161–163; Riv. 200–204.]

[2] [*Excursions*, p. 148; Riv. 181.]

age to imitate it. It can never match the luxury and superfluity of Nature. In Art all is seen; she cannot afford concealed wealth, and in consequence is niggardly; but Nature, even when she is scant and thin outwardly, contents us still by the assurance of a certain generosity at the roots. Surely no stinted hand has been at work here for these centuries to produce these particular tints this summer. The double spruce attracts me here, which I had hardly noticed in the gardens, and now I understand why men try to make them grow about their houses.[1]

Nature has her luxurious and florid style as well as Art. Having a pilgrim's cup to make, she gives to the whole — stem, bowl, handle, and nose — some fantastic shape, as if it were to be the car of a fabulous marine deity, — a Nereus or Triton. She is mythical and mystical always, and spends her whole genius upon the least work.[2]

Aug. 16. There is a double virtue in the sound that can wake an echo, as in the lowing of the cows this morning. Far out in the horizon that sound travels quite round the town, and invades each recess of the wood, advancing at a grand pace and with a sounding Eastern pomp.

Aug. 18. I sailed on the North River last night with

[1] [*Week*, p. 339; Riv. 419. The "double spruce" is now generally known as the black spruce. Thoreau makes it "single spruce" (*i. e.*, white spruce) in the book, but the tree he was familiar with was the black. He confused these two species for a time, but eventually discovered his error.]

[2] [*Excursions*, pp. 125, 126; Riv. 154, 155.]

my flute, and my music was a tinkling stream which meandered with the river, and fell from note to note as a brook from rock to rock. I did not hear the strains after they had issued from the flute, but before they were breathed into it, for the original strain precedes the sound by as much as the echo follows after, and the rest is the perquisite of the rocks and trees and beasts.[1] Unpremeditated music is the true gauge which measures the current of our thoughts, the very undertow of our life's stream.

Of all the duties of life it is hardest to be in earnest; it implies a good deal both before and behind. I sit here in the barn this flowing afternoon weather, while the school bell is ringing in the village, and find that all the things immediate to be done are very trivial. I could postpone them to hear this locust sing. The cockerels crow and the hens cluck in the yard as if time were dog-cheap. It seems something worth detaining time, — the laying of an egg. Cannot man do something to comfort the gods, and not let the world prove such a piddling concern? No doubt they would be glad to sell their shares at a large discount by this time. Eastern Railroad stock promises a better dividend.

The best poets, after all, exhibit only a tame and civil side of nature. They have not seen the west side of any mountain.

Day and night, mountain and wood, are visible from the wilderness as well as the village. They have their

[1] [*Week*, p. 363; Riv. 449.]

primeval aspects, sterner, savager than any poet has sung. It is only the white man's poetry. We want the Indian's report. Wordsworth is too tame for the Chippeway.[1]

The landscape contains a thousand dials which indicate the natural divisions of time; the shadows of a thousand styles point to the hour. The afternoon is now far advanced, and a fresh and leisurely wind is blowing on the river, causing long reaches of serene ripples. It has done its stent, and seems not to flow but lie at its length reflecting the light. The haze over the woods seems like the breath of all nature, rising from a myriad pores into the attenuated atmosphere.[2] It is sun smoke, the woof he has woven, his day's toil displayed.[3]

If I were awaked from a deep sleep, I should know which side the meridian the sun might be by the chirping of the crickets. Night has already insidiously set her foot in the valley in many places, where the shadows of the shrubs and fences begin to darken the landscape. There is a deeper shading in the colors of the afternoon landscape. Perhaps the forenoon is brighter than the afternoon, not only because of the greater transparency of the atmosphere then, but because we naturally look most into the west, — as we look forward into the day, — and so in the forenoon see the sunny side of things, but in the afternoon the shadow of every tree.

What a drama of light and shadow from morning to night! Soon as the sun is over the meridian, in deep

[1] [*Week*, p. 56 ; Riv. 70.] [2] [*Week*, p. 341 ; Riv. 422.]
[3] [*Week*, p. 229 ; Riv. 284.]

ravines under the east side of the cliffs night forwardly plants her foot, and, as day retreats, steps into his trenches, till at length she sits in his citadel. For long time she skulks behind the needles of the pine, before she dares draw out her forces into the plain. Sun, moon, wind, and stars are the allies of one side or the other.[1]

How much will some officious men give to preserve an old book, of which perchance only a single [copy] exists, while a wise God is already giving, and will still give, infinitely more to get it destroyed!

Aug. 20. *Friday.* It seems as if no cock lived so far in the horizon but a faint vibration reached me here, spread the wider over earth as the more distant.

In the morning the crickets snore, in the afternoon they chirp, at midnight they dream.

Aug. 24. Let us wander where we will, the universe is built round about us, and we are central still. By reason of this, if we look into the heavens, they are concave, and if we were to look into a gulf as bottomless, it would be concave also. The sky is curved downward to the earth in the horizon, because I stand in the plain. I draw down its skirts. The stars so low there seem loth to go away from me, but by a circuitous path to be remembering and returning to me.[2]

Aug. 28. *Saturday.* A great poet will write for his peers alone, and indite no line to an inferior. He will

[1] [*Week*, p. 341; Riv. 421, 422.] [2] [*Week*, p. 353; Riv. 436, 437.]

remember only that he saw truth and beauty from his position, and calmly expect the time when a vision as broad shall overlook the same field as freely.[1]

Johnson can no more criticise Milton than the naked eye can criticise Herschel's map of the sun.

The art which only gilds the surface and demands merely a superficial polish, without reaching to the core, is but varnish and filigree. But the work of genius is rough-hewn from the first, because it anticipates the lapse of time and has an ingrained polish, which still appears when fragments are broken off, an essential quality of its substance. Its beauty is its strength. It breaks with a lustre, and splits in cubes and diamonds. Like the diamond, it has only to be cut to be polished, and its surface is a window to its interior splendors.

True verses are not counted on the poet's fingers, but on his heart-strings.

> My life hath been the poem I would have writ,
> But I could not both live and live to utter it.[2]

In the Hindoo scripture the idea of man is quite illimitable and sublime. There is nowhere a loftier conception of his destiny. He is at length lost in Brahma himself, "the divine male." Indeed, the distinction of races in this life is only the commencement of a series of degrees which ends in Brahma.

The veneration in which the Vedas are held is itself

[1] [*Week*, p. 363; Riv. 450.] [2] [*Week*, p. 365; Riv. 453.]

a remarkable fact. Their code embraced the whole moral life of the Hindoo, and in such a case there is no other truth than sincerity. Truth is such by reference to the heart of man within, not to any standard without. There is no creed so false but faith can make it true.

In inquiring into the origin and genuineness of this scripture it is impossible to tell when the divine agency in its composition ceased, and the human began. "From fire, from air, and from the sun" was it "milked out."

There is no grander conception of creation anywhere. It is peaceful as a dream,[1] and so is the annihilation of the world. It is such a beginning and ending as the morning and evening, for they had learned that God's methods are not violent. It was such an awakening as might have been heralded by the faint dreaming chirp of the crickets before the dawn.

The very indistinctness of its theogony implies a sublime truth. It does not allow the reader to rest in any supreme first cause, but directly hints of a supremer still which created the last. The creator is still behind, increate.[2] The divinity is so fleeting that its attributes are never expressed.

Aug. 30. What is a day, if the day's work be not done? What are the divisions of time to them who have nothing to do? What is the present or the future to him who has no occasion for them, who does not create them by his industry?

[1] [*Week*, p. 159; Riv. 198.] [2] [*Week*, p. 159; Riv. 199.]

It is now easy to apply to this ancient scripture such a catholic criticism as it will become the part of some future age to apply to the Christian, — wherein the design and idea which underlies it is considered, and not the narrow and partial fulfillment.

These verses are so eminently textual, that it seems as if those old sages had concentrated all their wisdom in little fascicles, of which future times were to be the commentary; as the light of this lower world is only the dissipated rays of the sun and stars.[1] They seem to have been uttered with a sober morning prescience, in the dawn of time.[2] There is a sort of holding back, or withdrawal of the full meaning, that the ages may follow after and explore the whole. The sentence opens unexpensively and almost unmeaningly, as the petals of a flower.[3]

To our nearsightedness this mere outward life seems a constituent part of us, and we do not realize that as our soul expands it will cast off the shell of routine and convention, which afterward will only be an object for the cabinets of the curious. But of this people the temples are now crumbled away, and we are introduced to the very hearth of Hindoo life and to the primeval conventicle where how to eat and to drink and to sleep were the questions to be decided.[4]

The simple life herein described confers on us a degree of freedom even in the perusal. We throw down

[1] [*Week*, p. 155; Riv. 194.]
[2] [*Week*, p. 155; Riv. 193.]
[3] [*Week*, p. 155; Riv. 194.]
[4] [*Week*, p. 156; Riv. 195.]

our packs and go on our way unencumbered. Wants so easily and gracefully satisfied that they seem like a more refined pleasure and repleteness.[1]

Sept. 1. *Wednesday.* When I observe the effeminate taste of some of my contemporaries in this matter of poetry, and how hardly they bear with certain incongruities, I think if this age were consulted it would not choose granite to be the backbone of the world, but Bristol spar or Brazilian diamonds. But the verses which have consulted the refinements even of a golden age will be found weak and nerveless for an iron one. The poet is always such a Cincinnatus in literature as with republican simplicity to raise all to the chiefest honors of the state.

Each generation thinks to inhabit only a west end of the world, and have intercourse with a refined and civilized Nature, not conceiving of her broad equality and republicanism. They think her aristocratic and exclusive because their own estates are narrow. But the sun indifferently selects his rhymes, and with a liberal taste weaves into his verse the planet and the stubble.[2]

Let us know and conform only to the fashions of eternity.

The very austerity of these Hindoos is tempting to the devotional as a more refined and nobler luxury.[3] They seem to have indulged themselves with a certain moderation and temperance in the severities which their

[1] [*Week*, p. 159; Riv. 198.] [2] [*Week*, p. 402; Riv. 496.]
[3] [*Week*, p. 159; Riv. 198.]

code requires, as divine exercises not to be excessively used as yet. One may discover the root of a Hindoo religion in his own private history, when, in the silent intervals of the day or the night, he does sometimes inflict on himself like austerities with a stern satisfaction.

The "Laws of Menu" are a manual of private devotion, so private and domestic and yet so public and universal a word as is not spoken in the parlor or pulpit in these days.[1] It is so impersonal that it exercises our sincerity more than any other. It goes with us into the yard and into the chamber, and is yet later spoken than the advice of our mother and sisters.[2]

Sept. 2. *Thursday.* There is but one obligation, and that is the obligation to obey the highest dictate. None can lay me under another which will supersede this. The gods have given me these years without any incumbrance; society has no mortgage on them. If any man assist me in the way of the world, let him derive satisfaction from the deed itself, for I think I never shall have dissolved my prior obligations to God. Kindness repaid is thereby annulled. I would let his deed lie as fair and generous as it was intended. The truly beneficent never relapses into a creditor; his great kindness is still extended to me and is never done. Of those noble deeds which have me for their object I am only the most fortunate spectator, and would rather be the abettor of their nobleness than stay their tide with the obstructions of impatient gratitude. As true as action and reaction are equal, that nobleness which was as wide as the

[1] [*Week*, p. 156; Riv. 194.] [2] [*Week*, p. 156; Riv. 195.]

universe will rebound not on him the individual, but on the world. If any have been kind to me, what more do they want? I cannot make them richer than they are. If they have not been kind, they cannot take from me the privilege which they have not improved. My obligations will be my lightest load, for that gratitude which is of kindred stuff in me, expanding every pore, will easily sustain the pressure. We walk the freest through the air we breathe.

The sublime sentences of Menu carry us back to a time when purification and sacrifice and self-devotion had a place in the faith of men, and were not as now a superstition. They contain a subtle and refined philosophy also, such as in these times is not accompanied with so lofty and pure a devotion.

I saw a green meadow in the midst of the woods to-day which looked as if Dame Nature had set her foot there, and it had bloomed in consequence. It was the print of her moccasin.

Sometimes my thought rustles in midsummer as if ripe for the fall.[1] I anticipate the russet hues and the dry scent of autumn, as the feverish man dreams of balm and sage.

I was informed to-day that no Hindoo tyranny presided at the framing of the world, — that I am a freeman of the universe, and not sentenced to any caste.[2]

[1] [*Week*, p. 358; Riv. 443.] [2] [*Week*, p. 155; Riv. 193.]

When I write verses I serve my thoughts as I do tumblers; I rap them to see if they will ring.

Sept. 3. *Friday.* Next to Nature, it seems as if man's actions were the most natural, they so gently accord with her. The small seines of flax or hemp stretched across the shallow and transparent parts of the river are no more intrusion than the cobweb in the sun. It is very slight and refined outrage at most. I stay my boat in mid-current and look down in the running water to see the civil meshes of his nets, and wonder how the blustering people of the town could have done this elvish work. The twine looks like a new river-weed and is to the river like a beautiful memento of man, man's presence in nature discovered as silently and delicately as Robinson discovered that there [were] savages on his island by a footprint in the sand.[1]

Moonlight is the best restorer of antiquity. The houses in the village have a classical elegance as of the best days of Greece, and this half-finished church reminds me of the Parthenon, or whatever is most famous and excellent in art.[2] So serene it stands, reflecting the moon, and intercepting the stars with its rafters, as if it were refreshed by the dews of the night equally with me. By day Mr. Hosmer, but by night Vitruvius rather. If it were always to stand in this mild and sombre light it would be finished already. It is in progress by day but completed by night, and already its

[1] [*Excursions*, p. 119; Riv. 146, 147.]
[2] [*Excursions*, pp. 331, 332; Riv. 408.]

designer is an old master. The projecting rafter so carelessly left on the tower, holding its single way through the sky, is quite architectural, and in the unnecessary length of the joists and flooring of the staging around the walls there is an artistic superfluity and grace. In these fantastic lines described upon the sky there is no trifling or conceit. Indeed, the staging for the most part is the only genuine native architecture and deserves to stand longer than the building it surrounds. In this obscurity there are no fresh colors to offend, and the light and shade of evening adorn the new equally with the old.

Sept. 4. *Saturday.* I think I could write a poem to be called "Concord." For argument I should have the River, the Woods, the Ponds, the Hills, the Fields, the Swamps and Meadows, the Streets and Buildings, and the Villagers. Then Morning, Noon, and Evening, Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter, Night, Indian Summer, and the Mountains in the Horizon.

A book should be so true as to be intimate and familiar to all men, as the sun to their faces, — such a word as is occasionally uttered to a companion in the woods in summer, and both are silent.

As I pass along the streets of the village on the day of our annual fair, when the leaves strew the ground, I see how the trees keep just such a holiday all the year. The lively spirits of their sap mount higher than any plowboy's let loose that day. A walk in the autumn woods, when, with serene courage, they are preparing for their

winter campaign, if you have an ear for the rustling of their camp or an eye for the glancing of their armor, is more inspiring than the Greek or Peninsular war.[1] Any grandeur may find society as great as itself in the forest.

Pond Hill. — I see yonder some men in a boat, which floats buoyantly amid the reflections of the trees, like a feather poised in mid-air, or a leaf wafted gently from its twig to the water without turning over. They seem very delicately to have availed themselves of the natural laws, and their floating there looks like a beautiful and successful experiment in philosophy. It reminds me how much more refined and noble the life of man might be made, how its whole economy might be as beautiful as a Tuscan villa,[2] — a new and more catholic art, the art of life, which should have its impassioned devotees and make the schools of Greece and Rome to be deserted.

Sept. 5. Saturday. Barn.

Greater is the depth of sadness
Than is any height of gladness.

I cannot read much of the best poetry in prose or verse without feeling that it is a partial and exaggerated plaint, rarely a carol as free as Nature's. That content which the sun shines for between morning and evening is unsung. The Muse solaces herself; she is not delighted but consoled.[3] But there are times when we feel a vigor in our limbs, and our thoughts are like a

[1] [*Week*, p. 358; Riv. 443.] [2] [*Week*, p. 48; Riv. 60.]
[3] [*Week*, p. 393; Riv. 486.]

flowing morning light, and the stream of our life without reflection shows long reaches of serene ripples. And if we were to sing at such an hour, there would be no catastrophe contemplated in our verse, no tragic element in it,[1] nor yet a comic. For the life of the gods is not in any sense dramatic, nor can be the subject of the drama; it is epic without beginning or end, an eternal interlude without plot, — not subordinate one part to another, but supreme as a whole, at once leaf and flower and fruit. At present the highest strain is Hebraic. The church bell is the tone of all religious thought, the most musical that men consent to sing. In the youth of poetry, men love to praise the lark and the morning, but they soon forsake the dews and skies for the nightingale and evening shades. Without instituting a wider comparison I might say that in Homer there is more of the innocence and serenity of youth than in the more modern and moral poets. The Iliad is not Sabbath but morning reading, and men cling to this old song, because they have still moments of unbaptized and uncommitted life which give them an appetite for more. There is no cant in him, as there is no religion. We read him with a rare sense of freedom and irresponsibleness, as though we trod on native ground, and were autochthones of the soil.[2]

Through the fogs of this distant vale we look back and upward to the source of song, whose crystal stream still ripples and gleams in the clear atmosphere of the mountain's side.

[1] [*Week*, pp. 393, 394; Riv. 486.] [2] [*Week*, p. 394; Riv. 486.]

Some hours seem not to be occasion for anything, unless for great resolves to draw breath and repose in, so religiously do we postpone all action therein. We do not straight go about to execute our thrilling purpose, but shut our doors behind us, and saunter with prepared mind, as if the half were already done.[1]

Sometimes a day serves only to hold time together.[2]

Sept. 12. *Sunday.*

Where I have been
There was none seen.

Sept. 14. No bravery is to be named with that which can face its own deeds.

In religion there is no society.

Do not dissect a man till he is dead.

Love does not analyze its object.

We do not know the number of muscles in a caterpillar dead; much less the faculties of a man living.

You must believe that I know before you can tell me.

To the highest communication I can make no reply; I lend only a silent ear.

[1] [*Week*, p. 111; Riv. 138.]

[2] [See p. 213 for the possible origin of this figure.]

Sept. 18. *Saturday.* Barn. — It is a great event, the hearing of a bell ring in one of the neighboring towns, particularly in the night. It excites in me an unusual hilarity, and I feel that I am in season wholly and enjoy a prime and leisure hour.

Sept. 20. *Monday.* Visited Sampson Wilder of Boston. His method of setting out peach trees is as follows: —

Dig a hole six feet square and two deep, and remove the earth; cover the bottom to the depth of six inches with lime and ashes in equal proportions, and upon this spread another layer of equal thickness, of horn parings, tips of horns, bones, and the like, then fill up with a compost of sod and strong animal manure, say four bushels of hog manure to a cartload of sod. Cover the tree — which should be budded at two years old — but slightly, and at the end of two years dig a trench round it three feet from the tree and six inches deep, and fill it with lime and ashes.

For grapes: —

Let your trench be twelve feet wide and four deep, cover the bottom with paving-stones six inches, then old bricks with mortar attached or loose six inches more, then beef-bones, horns, etc., six more (Captain Bobadil), then a compost similar to the preceding. Set your roots one foot from the north side, the trench running east and west, and bury eight feet of the vine crosswise the trench, not more than eight inches below the surface. Cut it down for three or four years, that root may accumulate, and then train it from the sun up an inclined plane.

Sept. 28. *Tuesday.* I anticipate the coming in of spring as a child does the approach of some pomp through a gate of the city.

Sept. 30. Better wait
Than be too late.[1]

Nov. 29. Cambridge. — One must fight his way, after a fashion, even in the most civil and polite society. The most truly kind and gracious have to be won by a sort of valor, for the seeds of suspicion seem to lurk in every spadeful of earth, as well as those of confidence. The president and librarian turn the cold shoulder to your application, though they are known for benevolent persons. They wonder if you can be anything but a thief, contemplating frauds on the library. It is the instinctive and salutary principle of self-defense; that which makes the cat show her talons when you take her by the paw.[2]

Certainly that valor which can open the hearts of men is superior to that which can only open the gates of cities.[3]

You must always let people see that they serve them-

[1] [On the back lining-page of the manuscript Journal volume which ends with this date are the following sentences in pencil:]

There is another young day let loose to roam the earth.

Happiness is very unprofitable stock.

The love which is preached nowadays is an ocean of new milk for a man to swim in. I hear no surf nor surge, but the winds coo over it.

[2] [See *Week*, pp. xx, xxi; *Misc.*, Riv. 8, 9 (Emerson's Biographical Sketch of Thoreau).]

[3] [*Week*, p. 291; Riv. 361.]

selves more than you, — not by your ingratitude, but by sympathy and congratulation.

The twenty-first volume of Chalmers's English Poets contains Hoole's and Mickle's Translations. In the shape of a note to the Seventh Book of the Lusiad, Mickle has written a long "Inquiry into the Religious Tenets and Philosophy of the Bramins."

Nov. 30. *Tuesday.* Cambridge. — When looking over the dry and dusty volumes of the English poets, I cannot believe that those fresh and fair creations I had imagined are contained in them. English poetry from Gower down, collected into one alcove, and so from the library window compared with the commonest nature, seems very mean. Poetry cannot breathe in the scholar's atmosphere. The Aubreys and Hickeses, with all their learning, prophane it yet indirectly by their zeal. You need not envy his feelings who for the first time has cornered up poetry in an alcove. I can hardly be serious with myself when I remember that I have come to Cambridge after poetry; and while I am running over the catalogue and collating and selecting, I think if it would not be a shorter way to a complete volume to step at once into the field or wood, with a very low reverence to students and librarians. Milton did not foresee what company he was to fall into.[1] On running over the titles of these books, looking from time to time at their first pages or farther, I am oppressed by an inevitable sadness. One must have come into a

[1] [*Week*, p. 363 ; Riv. 450.]

library by an oriel window, as softly and undisturbed as the light which falls on the books through a stained window, and not by the librarian's door, else all his dreams will vanish. Can the Valhalla be warmed by steam and go by clock and bell?

Good poetry seems so simple and natural a thing that when we meet it we wonder that all men are not always poets. Poetry is nothing but healthy speech. Though the speech of the poet goes to the heart of things, yet he is that one especially who speaks civilly to Nature as a second person and in some sense is the patron of the world. Though more than any he stands in the midst of Nature, yet more than any he can stand aloof from her. The best lines, perhaps, only suggest to me that that man simply saw or heard or felt what seems the commonest fact in my experience.

One will know how to appreciate Chaucer best who has come down to him the natural way through the very meagre pastures of Saxon and ante-Chaucerian poetry. So human and wise he seems after such diet that we are as liable to misjudge him so as usually.[1]

The Saxon poetry extant seems of a more serious and philosophical cast than the very earliest that can be called English. It has more thought, but less music. It translates Boëthius, it paraphrases the Hebrew Bible, it solemnly sings of war, of life and death, and chronicles events. The earliest English poetry is tinctured with romance through the influence of the Normans, as the Saxon was not. The ballad and metrical romance

[1] [*Week*, p. 395; Riv. 488.]

belong to this period. Those old singers were for the most part imitators or translators.[1] Or will it not appear, when viewed at a sufficient distance, that our brave new poets are also secondary as they, and refer the eye that reads them and their poetry, too, back and backward without end?

Nothing is so attractive and unceasingly curious as character. There is no plant that needs such tender treatment, there is none that will endure so rough. It is the violet and the oak. It is the thing we mean, let us say what we will. We mean our own character, or we mean yours. It is divine and related to the heavens, as the earth is by the flashes of the Aurora. It has no acquaintance nor companion. It goes silent and unobserved longer than any planet in space, but when at length it does show itself, it seems like the flowering of all the world, and its before unseen orbit is lit up like the trail of a meteor. I hear no good news ever but some trait of a noble character. It reproaches me plaintively. I am mean in contrast, but again am thrilled and elevated that I can see my own meanness, and again still, that my own aspiration is realized in that other. You reach me, my friend, not by your kind or wise words to me here or there; but as you retreat, perhaps after years of vain familiarity, some gesture or unconscious action in the distance speaks to me with more emphasis than all those years. I am not concerned to know what eighth planet is wandering in space up there, or when Venus or Orion rises,

[1] [*Week*, p. 395; Riv. 488.]

but if, in any cot to east or west and set behind the woods, there is any planetary character illuminating the earth.

Packed in my mind lie all the clothes
Which outward nature wears,
For, as its hourly fashions change,
It all things else repairs.

My eyes look inward, not without,
And I but hear myself,
And this new wealth which I have got
Is part of my own pelf.

For while I look for change abroad,
I can no difference find,
Till some new ray of peace uncalled
Lumines my inmost mind,

As, when the sun streams through the wood,
Upon a winter's morn,
Where'er his silent beams may stray
The murky night is gone.

How could the patient pine have known
The morning breeze would come,
Or simple flowers anticipate
The insect's noonday hum,

Till that new light with morning cheer
From far streamed through the aisles,

And nimbly told the forest trees
For many stretching miles?[1]

[*Dec.*] 12. *Sunday.* All music is only a sweet striving to express character. Now that lately I have heard of some traits in the character of a fair and earnest maiden whom I had only known superficially, but who has gone hence to make herself more known by distance, they sound like strains of a wild harp music. They make all persons and places who had thus forgotten her to seem late and behindhand. Every maiden conceals a fairer flower and more luscious fruit than any calyx in the field, and if she go with averted face, confiding in her own purity and high resolves, she will make the heavens retrospective, and all nature will humbly confess its queen.[2]

There is apology enough for all the deficiency and shortcoming in the world in the patient waiting of any bud of character to unfold itself.

Only character can command our reverent love. It is all mysteries in itself.

What is it gilds the trees and clouds
And paints the heavens so gay,
But yonder fast-abiding light
With its unchanging ray?

[1] [This poem, with the four additional stanzas of the next date, appears in the *Week*, pp. 313, 314 (Riv. 388, 389) under the title of "The Inward Morning." The second stanza is there omitted and there are other alterations.]

[2] [*Familiar Letters*, Sept., 1852.]

I've felt within my inmost soul
Such cheerful morning news,
In the horizon of my mind
I've seen such morning hues,

As in the twilight of the dawn,
When the first birds awake,
Is heard within some silent wood
Where they the small twigs break;

Or in the eastern skies is seen
Before the sun appears,
Foretelling of the summer heats
Which far away he bears.

P. M. Walden. — I seem to discern the very form of the wind when, blowing over the hills, it falls in broad flakes upon the surface of the pond, this subtle element obeying the same law with the least subtle. As it falls it spreads itself like a mass of lead dropped upon an anvil. I cannot help being encouraged by this blithe activity in the elements in these degenerate days of men. Who hears the rippling of the rivers will not utterly despair of anything. The wind in the wood yonder sounds like an incessant waterfall, the water dashing and roaring among rocks.

[*Dec.*] 13. *Monday.* We constantly anticipate repose. Yet it surely can only be the repose that is in entire and healthy activity. It must be a repose without rust. What is leisure but opportunity for more complete and

entire action? Our energies pine for exercise. That time we spend in our duties is so much leisure, so that there is no man but has sufficient of it.

I make my own time, I make my own terms. I cannot see how God or Nature can ever get the start of me.

This ancient Scotch poetry, at which its contemporaries so marvelled, sounds like the uncertain lisping of a child. When man's speech flows freest it but stutters and stammers. There is never a free and clear deliverance; but, read now when the illusion of smooth verse is destroyed by the antique spelling, the sense is seen to stammer and stumble all the plainer. To how few thoughts do all these sincere efforts give utterance! An hour's conversation with these men would have done more. I am astonished to find how meagre that diet is which has fed so many men. The music of sound, which is all-sufficient at first, is speedily lost, and then the fame of the poet must rest on the music of the sense. A great philosophical and moral poet would give permanence to the language by making the best sound convey the best sense.

[*Dec.*] 14. *Tuesday.* To hear the sunset described by the old Scotch poet Douglas, as I have seen it, repays me for many weary pages of antiquated Scotch. Nothing so restores and humanizes antiquity and makes it blithe as the discovery of some natural sympathy between it and the present. Why is it that there is something melancholy in antiquity? We forget that it had any other future than our present. As if it were not as

near to *the* future as ourselves! No, thank heavens, these ranks of men to right and left, posterity and ancestry, are not to be thridded by any earnest mortal. The heavens stood over the heads of our ancestors as near as to us. Any living word in their books abolishes the difference of time. It need only be considered from the present standpoint.

[*Dec.*] 15. *Wednesday.* A mild summer sun shines over forest and lake. The earth looks as fair this morning as the Valhalla of the gods. Indeed our spirits never go beyond nature. In the woods there is an inexpressible happiness. Their mirth is but just repressed. In winter, when there is but one green leaf for many rods, what warm content is in them! They are not rude, but tender, even in the severest cold. Their nakedness is their defense. All their sounds and sights are elixir to my spirit. They possess a divine health. God is not more well. Every sound is inspiriting and fraught with the same mysterious assurance, from the creaking of the boughs in January to the soft sough of the wind in July.

How much of my well-being, think you, depends on the condition of my lungs and stomach, — such cheap pieces of Nature as they, which, indeed, she is every day reproducing with prodigality. Is the arrow indeed fatal which rankles in the breast of the bird on the bough, in whose eye all this fair landscape is reflected, and whose voice still echoes through the wood?

The trees have come down to the bank to see the river go by. This old, familiar river is renewed each instant;

only the channel is the same.[1] The water which so calmly reflects the fleeting clouds and the primeval trees I have never seen before. It may have washed some distant shore, or framed a glacier or iceberg at the north, when I last stood here. Seen through a mild atmosphere, the works of the husbandman, his plowing and reaping, have a beauty to the beholder which the laborer never sees.[2]

I seem to see somewhat more of my own kith and kin in the lichens on the rocks than in any books. It does seem as if mine were a peculiarly wild nature, which so yearns toward all wildness. I know of no redeeming qualities in me but a sincere love for some things, and when I am reproved I have to fall back on to this ground.[3] This is my argument in reserve for all cases. My love is invulnerable. Meet me on that ground, and you will find me strong. When I am condemned, and condemn myself utterly, I think straightway, "But I rely on my love for some things." Therein I am whole and entire. Therein I am God-propped.

When I see the smoke curling up through the woods from some farmhouse invisible, it is more suggestive of the poetry of rural and domestic life than a nearer inspection can be. Up goes the smoke as quietly as the dew exhales in vapor from these pine leaves and oaks; as busy, disposing itself in circles and in wreaths, as the housewife on the hearth below. It is cotemporary with a piece of human biography, and waves as a feather in some *man's* cap. Under that rod of sky there is some

[1] [See p. 347.] [2] [*Week*, p. 373; Riv. 461.]
[3] [*Week*, p. 54; Riv. 67.]

Winter Landscape from Fair Haven Hill

plot a-brewing, some ingenuity has planted itself, and we shall see what it will do. It tattles of more things than the boiling of the pot. It is but one of man's breaths. All that is interesting in history or fiction is transpiring beneath that cloud. The subject of all life and death, of happiness and grief, goes thereunder.

When the traveller in the forest, attaining to some eminence, descries a column of smoke in the distance, it is a very gentle hint to him of the presence of man. It seems as if it would establish friendly relations between them without more ado.[1]

[*Dec.*] 18. *Saturday.* Some men make their due impression upon their generation, because a petty occasion is enough to call forth all their energies; but are there not others who would rise to much higher levels, whom the world has never provoked to make the effort? I believe there are men now living who have never opened their mouths in a public assembly, in whom nevertheless there is such a well of eloquence that the appetite of any age could never exhaust it; who pine for an occasion worthy of them, and will pine till they are dead; who can admire, as well as the rest, at the flowing speech of the orator, but do yet miss the thunder and lightning and visible sympathy of the elements which would garnish their own utterance.

If in any strait I see a man fluttered and his ballast gone, then I lose all hope of him, he is undone; but if he reposes still, though he do nothing else worthy of him, if he is still a man in reserve, then is there every-

[1] [*Excursions*, p. 174; Riv. 212.]

thing to hope of him. The age may well go pine itself that it cannot put to use this gift of the gods. He lives on, still unconcerned, not needing to be used. The greatest occasion will be the slowest to come.

Sometimes a particular body of men do unconsciously assert that their will is fate, that the right is decided by their fiat without appeal, and when this is the case they can never be mistaken; as when one man is quite silenced by the thrilling eloquence of another, and submits to be neglected as to his fate, because such is not the willful vote of the assembly, but their instinctive decision.

Dec. 23. Thursday. Concord. — The best man's spirit makes a fearful sprite to haunt his tomb. The ghost of a priest is no better than that of a highwayman. It is pleasant to hear of one who has blest whole regions after his death by having frequented them while alive, who has prophaned or tabooed no place by being buried in it.[1] It adds not a little to the fame of Little John that his grave was long "celebrous for the yielding of excellent whetstones." [2]

A forest is in all mythologies a sacred place, as the oaks among the Druids and the grove of Egeria; and even in more familiar and common life a celebrated wood is spoken of with respect, as "Barnsdale Wood"

[1] [Written in pencil on a fly-leaf of the Journal:] A man might well pray that he may not taboo or curse any portion of nature by being buried in it.

[2] [Channing, p. 241.]

and "Sherwood." Had Robin Hood no Sherwood to resort [to], it would be difficult to invest his story with the charms it has got. It is always the tale that is untold, the deeds done and the life lived in the unexplored secrecy of the wood, that charm us and make us children again, — to read his ballads, and hear of the greenwood tree.

Dec. 24. Friday. I want to go soon and live away by the pond, where I shall hear only the wind whispering among the reeds. It will be success if I shall have left myself behind. But my friends ask what I will do when I get there. Will it not be employment enough to watch the progress of the seasons? [1]

Dec. 25. Saturday. It does seem as if Nature did for a long time gently overlook the prophanity of man. The wood still kindly echoes the strokes of the axe, and when the strokes are few and seldom, they add a new charm to a walk. All the elements strive to *naturalize* the sound.[2]

Such is our sympathy with the seasons that we experience the same degree of heat in the winter as in the summer.

It is not a true apology for any coarseness to say that it is natural. The grim woods can afford to be very delicate and perfect in the details.

I don't want to feel as if my life were a sojourn any longer. That philosophy cannot be true which so paints it. It is time now that I begin to live.

[1] [See p. 244.] [2] [*Excursions*, p. 173; Riv. 212.]

Dec. 26. Sunday. He is the rich man and enjoys the fruits of riches, who, summer and winter forever, can find delight in the contemplation of his soul. I could look as unweariedly up to that cope as into the heavens of a summer day or a winter night. When I hear this bell ring, I am carried back to years and Sabbaths when I was newer and more innocent, I fear, than now, and it seems to me as if there were a world within a world. Sin, I am sure, is not in overt acts or, indeed, in acts of any kind, but is in proportion to the time which has come behind us and displaced eternity, — that degree to which our elements are mixed with the elements of the world. The whole duty of life is contained in the question how to respire and aspire both at once.

Dec. 29. Wednesday. One does not soon learn the trade of life. That one may work out a true life requires more art and delicate skill than any other work. There is need of the nice fingers of the girl as well as the tough hand of the farmer. The daily work is too often toughening the pericarp of the heart as well as the hand. Great familiarity with the world must be nicely managed, lest it win away and bereave us of some susceptibility. Experience bereaves us of our innocence; wisdom bereaves us of our ignorance. Let us walk in the world without learning its ways. Whole weeks or months of my summer life slide away in thin volumes like mist or smoke, till at length some warm morning, perchance, I see a sheet of mist blown down the brook to the swamp, its shadow flitting across the fields, which have caught a new significance from that accident; and as that

vapor is raised above the earth, so shall the next weeks be elevated above the plane of the actual;[1] or when the setting sun slants across the pastures, and the cows low to my inward ear and only enhance the stillness, and the eve is as the dawn, a beginning hour and not a final one, as if it would never have done, with its clear western amber inciting men to lives of as limpid purity. Then do other parts of my day's work shine than I had thought at noon, for I discover the real purport of my toil, as, when the husbandman has reached the end of the furrow and looks back, he can best tell where the pressed earth shines most.[2]

All true greatness runs as level a course, and is as unaspiring, as the plow in the furrow. It wears the homeliest dress and speaks the homeliest language. Its theme is gossamer and dew lines, johnswort and loosestrife, for it has never stirred from its repose and is most ignorant of foreign parts. Heaven is the inmost place. The good have not to travel far. What cheer may we not derive from the thought that our courses do not diverge, and we wend not asunder, but as the web of destiny is woven it [is] fulled, and we are cast more and more into the centre! And our fates even are social.[3] There is no wisdom which can take [the] place of humanity, and I find that in old Chaucer that love rings longest which rhymes best with some saw of Milton's or Edmunds's. I wish I could be as still as God is. I can recall to my mind the stillest summer hour,

[1] [*Week*, p. 314; Riv. 389.] [2] [*Week*, p. 133; Riv. 166.]
[3] [*Week*, p. 280; Riv. 347.]

in which the grasshopper sings over the mulleins, and there is a valor in that time the memory of which is armor that can laugh at any blow of fortune. A man should go out [of] nature with the chirp of the cricket or the trill of the veery ringing in his ear. These earthly sounds should only die away for a season, as the strains of the harp rise and swell. Death is that expressive pause in the music of the blast.[1] I would be as clean as ye, O woods. I shall not rest till I be as innocent as you. I know that I shall sooner or later attain to an unspotted innocence, for when I consider that state even now I am thrilled.

If we were wise enough, we should see to what virtue we were indebted for any happier moment we might have, nor doubt we had earned this at some time.

These motions everywhere in nature must surely [be] the circulations of God. The flowing sail, the running stream, the waving tree, the roving wind,—whence else their infinite health and freedom?[2] I can see nothing so proper and holy as unrelaxed play and frolic in this bower God has built for us. The suspicion of sin never comes to this thought. Oh, if men felt this they would never build temples even of marble or diamond, but it would be sacrilege and prophane, but disport them forever in this paradise.

In the coldest day it melts somewhere.

It seems as if only one trait, one little incident in human biography, need to be said or written in some era, that all readers may go mad after it, and the man who did the miracle is made a demigod henceforth.

[1] [*Week*, p. 314; Riv. 390.] [2] [*Week*, p. 384; Riv. 474.]

What we all do, not one can tell; and when some lucky speaker utters a truth of our experience and not of our speculation, we think he must have had the nine Muses and the three Graces to help him. I can at length stretch me when I come to Chaucer's breadth; and I think, "Well, I could be *that* man's acquaintance," [1] for he walked in that low and retired way that I do, and was not too good to live. I am grieved when they hint of any unmanly submissions he may have made, for that subtracts from his breadth and humanity.

Dec. 30. *Thursday.* I admire Chaucer for a sturdy English wit. The easy height he speaks from in his Prologue to the Canterbury Tales is as good as anything in it, — as if he were indeed better than any of the company there assembled.[2]

The poet does not have to go out of himself and cease to tattle of his domestic affairs, to win our confidence, but is so broad that we see no limits to his sympathy.

Great delicacy and gentleness of character is constantly displayed in Chaucer's verse. The simplest and humblest words come readily to his lips. The natural innocence of the man appears in the simple and pure spirit in which "The Prioresses Tale" is conceived, in which the child sings *O alma redemptoris mater*, and in the account of the departure of Custance with her child upon the sea, in "The Man of Lawes Tale."[3] The whole story of Chanticleer and Dame Partlet in "The Nonnes Preestes Tale" is genuine humanity. I know

[1] [*Week*, p. 396; Riv. 489.] [2] [*Week*, p. 397; Riv. 490.]
[3] [*Week*, p. 398; Riv. 491.]

nothing better in its kind. The poets seem to be only more frank and plain-spoken than other men. Their verse is but confessions. They always confide in the reader, and speak privily with him, keeping nothing back.[1]

I know of no safe rule by which to judge of the purity of a former age but that I see that the impure of the present age are not apt to rise to noble sentiments when they speak or write, and suspect, therefore, that there may be more truth than is allowed in the apology that such was the manner of the age.[2]

Within the circuit of this plodding life,
There are moments of an azure hue
And as unspotted fair as is the violet
Or anemone, when the spring strews them
By some south woodside; which make untrue
The best philosophy which has so poor an aim
But to console man for his grievance here.
I have remembered when the winter came,
High in my chamber in the frosty nights,
How in the summer past some
Unrecorded beam slanted across
Some upland pasture where the Johnswort grew,
Or heard, amidst the verdure of my mind, the bee's
long-smothered hum,
So by the cheap economy of God made rich to go upon
my wintry work again.
In the still, cheerful cold of winter nights,
When, in the cold light of the moon,

[1] [*Week*, p. 397; Riv. 490.] [2] [*Week*, p. 398; Riv. 491, 492.]

On every twig and rail and jutting spout
The icy spears are doubling their length
Against the glancing arrows of the sun,
And the shrunk wheels creak along the way,
Some summer accident long past
Of lakelet gleaming in the July beams,
Or hum of bee under the blue flag,
Loitering in the meads, or busy rill
which now stands dumb and still,
its own memorial, purling at its play along the slopes, and through the meadows next, till that its sound was quenched in the staid current of its parent stream.

In memory is the more reality. I have seen how the furrows shone but late upturned, and where the field-fare followed in the rear, when all the fields stood bound and hoar beneath a thick integument of snow.[1]

When the snow is falling thick and fast, the flakes nearest you seem to be driving straight to the ground, while the more distant seem to float in the air in a quivering bank, like feathers, or like birds at play, and not as if sent on any errand. So, at a little distance, all the works of Nature proceed with sport and frolic. They are more in the eye and less in the deed.

Dec. 31. *Friday.* Books of natural history make the most cheerful winter reading. I read in Audubon with a thrill of delight, when the snow covers the ground, of the magnolia, and the Florida keys, and their warm sea breezes; of the fence-rail, and the cotton-tree, and

[1] [*Excursions*, pp. 103, 104; Riv. 127, 128.]

the migrations of the rice-bird; or of the breaking up of winter in Labrador. I seem to hear the melting of the snow on the forks of the Missouri as I read. I imbibe some portion of health from these reminiscences of luxuriant nature.

There is a singular health for me in those words Labrador and East Main which no desponding creed recognizes. How much more than federal are these States! If there were no other vicissitudes but the seasons, with their attendant and consequent changes, our interest would never flag. Much more is a-doing than Congress wots of in the winter season. What journal do the persimmon and buckeye keep, or the sharp-shinned hawk? What is transpiring from summer to winter in the Carolinas, and the Great Pine Forest, and the Valley of the Mohawk? The merely political aspect of the land is never very cheering. Men are degraded when considered as the members of a political organization. As a nation the people never utter one great and healthy word. From this side all nations present only the symptoms of disease. I see but Bunker's Hill and Sing Sing, the District of Columbia and Sullivan's Island, with a few avenues connecting them. But paltry are all these beside one blast of the east or south wind which blows over them all.

In society you will not find health, but in nature. You must converse much with the field and woods, if you would imbibe such health into your mind and spirit as you covet for your body. Society is always diseased, and the best is the sickest. There is no scent in it so wholesome as that of the pines, nor any fragrance so

penetrating and restorative as that of everlasting in high pastures. Without that our feet at least stood in the midst of nature, all our faces would be pale and livid.

I should like to keep some book of natural history always by me as a sort of elixir, the reading of which would restore the tone of my system and secure me true and cheerful views of life. For to the sick, nature is sick, but to the well, a fountain of health. To the soul that contemplates some trait of natural beauty no harm nor disappointment can come. The doctrines of despair, of spiritual or political servitude, no priestcraft nor tyranny, was ever [*sic*] taught by such as drank in the harmony of nature.[1]

[1] [*Excursions*, pp. 103–105; Riv. 127–129.]

VI

1842

(ÆT. 24–25)

Jan. 1. Virtue is the deed of the bravest. It is that art which demands the greatest confidence and fearlessness. Only some hardy soul ventures upon it. Virtue is a bravery so hardy that it deals in what it has no experience in. The virtuous soul possesses a fortitude and hardihood which not the grenadier nor pioneer can match. It never shrunk. It goes singing to its work. Effort is its relaxation. The rude pioneer work of this world has been done by the most devoted worshippers of beauty.[1] Their resolution has possessed a keener edge than the soldier's. In winter is their campaign; they never go into quarters. They are elastic under the heaviest burden, under the extremest physical suffering.

Methinks good courage will not flag here on the Atlantic border as long as we are outflanked by the *Fur Countries*. There is enough in that sound to cheer one under any circumstances. The spruce, the hemlock, and the pine will not countenance despair. Methinks some creeds in vestries and churches do forget the hunter wrapped in furs by the Great Slave Lake, or how the Esquimaux sledges are drawn by dogs, and in the twilight of the northern night the hunter does not give over to follow the seal and walrus over the

[1] [*Week*, p. 362; Riv. 449.]

ice. These men are sick and of diseased imaginations who would toll the world's knell so soon. Cannot these sedentary sects do better than prepare the shrouds and write the epitaphs of those other busy living men? The practical faith of men belies the preacher's consolation. This is the creed of the hypochondriac.[1]

There is no infidelity so great as that which prays, and keeps the Sabbath, and founds churches. The sealer of the South Pacific preaches a truer doctrine. The church is the hospital for men's souls, but the reflection that he may one day occupy a ward in it should not discourage the cheerful labors of the able-bodied man. Let him remember the sick in their extremities, but not look thither as to his goal.[2]

Jan. 2. Sunday. The ringing of the church bell is a much more melodious sound than any that is heard within the church. All great values are thus public, and undulate like sound through the atmosphere. Wealth cannot purchase any great private solace or convenience. Riches are only the means of sociality. I will depend on the extravagance of my neighbors for my luxuries, for they will take care to pamper me if I will be overfed. The poor man who sacrificed nothing for the gratification seems to derive a safer and more natural enjoyment from his neighbor's extravagance than he does himself. It is a new natural product, from the contemplation of which he derives new vigor and solace as from a natural phenomenon.

[1] [*Excursions*, p. 105 ; Riv. 129, 130.]

[2] [*Week*, pp. 77, 78 ; Riv. 96, 97.]

In moments of quiet and leisure my thoughts are more apt to revert to some natural than any human relation.

Chaucer's sincere sorrow in his latter days for the grossness of his earlier works, and that he "cannot recall and annul" what he had "written of the base and filthy love of men towards women; but alas they are now continued from man to man," says he, "and I cannot do what I desire," is all very creditable to his character.

Chaucer is the make-weight of his century, — a worthy representative of England while Petrarch and Boccaccio lived in Italy, and Tell and Tamerlane in Switzerland and Asia, and Bruce and Rienzi in Europe, and Wickliffe and Gower in his own land. Edward III and John of Gaunt and the Black Prince complete the company. The fame of Roger Bacon came down from the preceding century, and Dante, though just departed, still exerted the influence of a living presence.[1]

With all his grossness he is not undistinguished for the tenderness and delicacy of his muse. A simple pathos and feminine gentleness is peculiar to him which not even Wordsworth can match.[2] And then his best passages of length are marked by a happy and healthy wit which is rather rare in the poetry of any nation. On the whole, he impresses me as greater than his reputation, and not a little like Homer and Shakespeare, for he would have held up his head in their company. Among the earliest English poets he is their landlord and host, and has the authority of such. We read him with affec-

[1] [*Week*, p. 396; Riv. 489.] [2] [*Week*, p. 398; Riv. 492.]

tion and without criticism, for he pleads no cause, but speaks for us, his readers, always. He has that greatness of trust and reliance which compels popularity. He is for a whole country and country [*sic*] to know and to be proud of. The affectionate mention which succeeding early poets make of him, coupling him with Homer and Virgil, is also to be taken into the account in estimating his character. King James and Dunbar of Scotland speak with more love and reverence of him than any cotemporary poet of his predecessors of the last century. That childlike relation, indeed, does not seem to exist now which was then.[1]

Jan. 3. *Monday.* It is pleasant when one can relieve the grossness of the kitchen and the table by the simple beauty of his repast, so that there may be anything in it to attract the eye of the artist even. I have been popping corn to-night, which is only a more rapid blossoming of the seed under a greater than July heat. The popped corn is a perfect winter flower, hinting of anemones and houstonias. For this little grace man has, mixed in with the vulgarness of his repast, he may well thank his stars. The law by which flowers unfold their petals seems only to have operated more suddenly under the intense heat. It looks like a sympathy in this seed of the corn with its sisters of the vegetable kingdom, as if by preference it assumed the flower form rather than the crystalline. Here has bloomed for my repast such a delicate blossom as will soon spring by the wall-sides. And this is as it should be. Why should not Nature revel sometimes, and

[1] [*Week*, p. 396; Riv. 489, 490.]

genially relax and make herself familiar at my board? I would have my house a bower fit to entertain her. It is a feast of such innocence as might have snowed down. By my warm hearth sprang these cerealious blossoms; here was the bank where they grew.

Methinks some such visible token of approval would always accompany the simple and healthy repast. There would be such a smiling and blessing upon it. Our appetite should always be so related to our taste, and the board we spread for its gratification be an epitome of the universal table which Nature sets by hill and wood and stream for her dumb pensioners.[1]

Jan. 5. Wednesday. I find that whatever hindrances may occur I write just about the same amount of truth in my Journal; for the record is more concentrated, and usually it is some very real and earnest life, after all, that interrupts. All flourishes are omitted. If I saw wood from morning to night, though I grieve that I could not observe the train of my thoughts during that time, yet, in the evening, the few scrannel lines which describe my day's occupations will make the creaking of the saw more musical than my freest fancies could have been. I find incessant labor with the hands, which engrosses the attention also, the best method to remove palaver out of one's style. One will not dance at his work who has wood to cut and cord before the night falls in the short days of winter; but every stroke will be husbanded, and ring soberly through the wood; and so will his lines ring and tell on the ear, when at evening he settles the

[1] [*Week*, pp. 237, 238; Riv. 294, 295.]

accounts of the day. I have often been astonished at the force and precision of style to which busy laboring men, unpracticed in writing, easily attain when they are required to make the effort. It seems as if their sincerity and plainness were the main thing to be taught in schools, — and yet not in the schools, but in the fields, in actual service, I should say. The scholar not unfrequently envies the propriety and emphasis with which the farmer calls to his team, and confesses that if that lingo were written it would surpass his labored sentences.

Who is not tired of the weak and flowing periods of the politician and scholar, and resorts not even to the Farmer's Almanac, to read the simple account of the month's labor, to restore his tone again? I want to see a sentence run clear through to the end, as deep and fertile as a well-drawn furrow which shows that the plow was pressed down to the beam. If our scholars would lead more earnest lives, we should not witness those lame conclusions to their ill-sown discourses, but their sentences would pass over the ground like loaded rollers, and not mere hollow and wooden ones, to press in the seed and make it germinate.

A well-built sentence, in the rapidity and force with which it works, may be compared to a modern corn-planter, which furrows out, drops the seed, and covers it up at one movement.[1]

The scholar requires hard labor as an impetus to his pen. He will learn to grasp it as firmly and wield it as gracefully and effectually as an axe or a sword. When

[1] [*Week*, pp. 108–110; Riv. 134–136.]

I consider the labored periods of some gentleman scholar, who perchance in feet and inches comes up to the standard of his race, and is nowise deficient in girth, I am amazed at the immense sacrifice of thews and sinews. What! these proportions and these bones, and this their work! How these hands hewed this fragile matter, mere filagree or embroidery fit for ladies' fingers! Can this be a stalwart man's work, who has marrow in his backbone and a tendon Achilles in his heel? They who set up Stonehenge did somewhat, — much in comparison, — if it were only their strength was once fairly laid out, and they stretched themselves.[1]

I discover in Raleigh's verses the vices of the courtier. They are not equally sustained, as if his noble genius were warped by the frivolous society of the court. He was capable of rising to a remarkable elevation. His poetry has for the most part a heroic tone and vigor as of a knight errant. But again there seems to have been somewhat unkindly in his education, and as if he had by no means grown up to be the man he promised. He was apparently too genial and loyal a soul, or rather he was incapable of resisting temptations from that quarter. If to his genius and culture he could have added the temperament of Fox or Cromwell, the world would have had cause longer to remember him. He was the pattern of nobility. One would have said it was by some lucky fate that he and Shakespeare flourished at the same time in England, and yet what do we know of their acquaintanceship?

[1] [*Week*, p. 110; Riv. 136, 137.]

Jan. 7. *Friday.* I am singularly refreshed in winter when I hear tell of service-berries, pokeweed, juniper. Is not heaven made up of these cheap summer glories? [1]

The great God is very calm withal. How superfluous is any excitement in his creatures! He listens equally to the prayers of the believer and the unbeliever. The moods of man should unfold and alternate as gradually and placidly as those of nature. The sun shines for aye! The sudden revolutions of these times and this generation have acquired a very exaggerated importance. They do not interest me much, for they are not in harmony with the longer periods of nature. The present, in any aspect in which it can be presented to the smallest audience, is always mean. God does not sympathize with the popular movements.

Jan. 8. *Saturday.* When, as now, in January a south wind melts the snow, and the bare ground appears, covered with sere grass and occasionally wilted green leaves which seem in doubt whether to let go their greenness quite or absorb new juices against the coming year, — in such a season a perfume seems to exhale from the earth itself and the south wind melts my integuments also. Then is she my mother earth. I derive a real vigor from the scent of the gale wafted over the naked ground, as from strong meats, and realize again how man is the pensioner of Nature. We are always conciliated and cheered when we are fed by [such] an influence, and our needs are felt to be part of the domestic economy of Nature.

[1] [*Excursions*, p. 104; Riv. 128.]

What offends me most in my compositions is the moral element in them. The repentant say never a brave word. Their resolves should be mumbled in silence. Strictly speaking, morality is not healthy. Those undeserved joys which come uncalled and make us more pleased than grateful are they that sing.

One music seems to differ from another chiefly in its more perfect time, to use this word in a true sense. In the steadiness and equanimity of music lies its divinity. It is the only assured tone.[1] When men attain to speak with as settled a faith and as firm assurance, their voices will sing and their feet march as do the feet of the soldier. The very dogs howl if time is disregarded. Because of the perfect time of this music-box — its harmony with itself — is its greater dignity and stateliness. This music is more nobly related for its more exact measure. So simple a difference as this more even pace raises it to the higher dignity.

Man's progress through nature should have an accompaniment of music. It relieves the scenery, which is seen through it as a subtler element, like a very clear morning air in autumn. Music wafts me through the clear, sultry valleys, with only a slight gray vapor against the hills.

Of what manner of stuff is the web of time wove, when these consecutive sounds called a strain of music can be wafted down through the centuries from Homer to me, and Homer have been conversant with that same unfathomable mystery and charm which so newly

[1] [*Week*, p. 184; Riv. 228.]

tingles my ears?[1] These single strains, these melodious cadences which plainly proceed out of a very deep meaning and a sustained soul, are the interjections of God. They are perhaps the expression of the perfect knowledge which the righteous at length attain to. Am I so like thee, my brother, that the cadence of two notes affects us alike? Shall I not some time have an opportunity to thank him who made music? I feel a sad cheer when I hear these lofty strains,[2] because there must be something in me as lofty that hears. But ah, I hear them but rarely! Does it not rather hear me? If my blood were clogged in my veins, I am sure it would run more freely. God must be very rich, who, for the turning of a pivot, can pour out such melody on me. It is a little prophet; it tells me the secrets of futurity. Where are its secrets wound up but in this box?[3] So much hope had slumbered. There are in music such strains as far surpass any faith in the loftiness of man's destiny.[4] He must be very sad before he can comprehend them. The clear, liquid notes from the morning fields beyond seem to come through a vale of sadness to man, which gives all music a plaintive air. It hath caught a higher pace than any virtue I know. It is the arch-reformer. It hastens the sun to his setting. It invites him to his rising. It is the sweetest reproach, a measured satire.

[1] [*Week*, p. 182; Riv. 226.] [2] [*Week*, p. 183; Riv. 227.]

[3] [It was about a year after the date of this entry that Richard F. Fuller made Thoreau a present of a music-box (see *Familiar Letters*, March 2, 1842, and Jan. 16 and 24, 1843), which a few months later, on departing for Staten Island, he lent to Hawthorne (*American Note-Books*, Riv. pp. 333, 338).]

[4] [*Week*, p. 184; Riv. 228.]

I know there is a people somewhere [where] this heroism has place. Or else things are to be learned which it will be sweet to learn.[1] This cannot be all rumor. When I hear this, I think of that everlasting and stable something which is not sound, but to be a thrilling reality, and can consent to go about the meanest work for as many years of time as it pleases even the Hindoo penance, for a year of the gods were as nothing to that which shall come after. What, then, can I do to hasten that other time, or that space where there shall be no time, and these things be a more living part of my life, — where there will be no discords in my life?

Jan. 9. *Sunday.* One cannot too soon forget his errors and misdemeanors; for [to] dwell long upon them is to add to the offense, and repentance and sorrow can only be displaced by somewhat better, and which is as free and original as if they had not been. Not to grieve long for any action, but to go immediately and do freshly and otherwise, subtracts so much from the wrong. Else we may make the delay of repentance the punishment of the sin. But a great nature will not consider its sins as its own, but be more absorbed in the prospect of that valor and virtue for the future which is more properly it, than in those improper actions which, by being sins, discover themselves to be not it.

Sir W. Raleigh's faults are those of a courtier and a soldier. In his counsels and aphorisms we see not

[1] [*Week*, p. 184; Riv. 228.]

unfrequently the haste and rashness of a boy. His philosophy was not wide nor deep, but continually giving way to the generosity of his nature. What he touches he adorns by his greater humanity and native nobleness, but he touches not the true nor original. He thus embellishes the old, but does not unfold the new. He seems to have been fitted by his genius for short flights of impulsive poetry, but not for the sustained loftiness of Shakespeare or Milton. He was not wise nor a seer in any sense, but rather one of nature's nobility; the most generous nature which can be spared to linger in the purlieus of the court.

His was a singularly perverted genius, with such an inclination to originality and freedom, and yet who never steered his own course. Of so fair and susceptible a nature, rather than broad or deep, that he delayed to slake his thirst at the nearest and even more turbid wells of truth and beauty. Whose homage to the least fair or noble left no space for homage to the all fair. The misfortune of his circumstances, or rather of the man, appears in the fact that he was the author of "Maxims of State" and "The Cabinet Council" and "The Soul's Errand."

Feb. 19. *Saturday.* I never yet saw two men sufficiently great to meet as two. In proportion as they are great the differences are fatal, because they are felt not to be partial but total. Frankness to him who is unlike me will lead to the utter denial of him. I begin to see how that the preparation for all issues is to do virtuously. When two approach to meet, they incur no petty dan-

gers, but they run terrible risks. Between the sincere there will be no civilities. No greatness seems prepared for the little decorum, even savage unmannerliness, it meets from equal greatness.

Feb. 20. *Sunday.* "Examine animal forms geometrically, from man, who represents the perpendicular, to the reptile which forms the horizontal line, and then applying to those forms the rules of the exact sciences, which God himself cannot change, we shall see that visible nature contains them all; that the combinations of the seven primitive forms are entirely exhausted, and that, therefore, they can represent all possible varieties of morality." — From "The True Messiah; or the Old and New Testaments, examined according to the Principles of the Language of Nature. By G. Segger," translated from French by Grater.

I am amused to see from my window here how busily man has divided and staked off his domain. God must smile at his puny fences running hither and thither everywhere over the land.

My path hitherto has been like a road through a diversified country, now climbing high mountains, then descending into the lowest vales. From the summits I saw the heavens; from the vales I looked up to the heights again. In prosperity I remember God, or memory is one with consciousness; in adversity I remember my own elevations, and only hope to see God again.

It is vain to talk. What do you want? To bandy words, or deliver some grains of truth which stir within you? Will you make a pleasant rumbling sound after feasting, for digestion's sake, or such music as the birds in springtime?

The death of friends should inspire us as much as their lives. If they are great and rich enough, they will leave consolation to the mourners before the expenses of their funerals.[1] It will not be hard to part with any worth, because it is worthy. How can any good depart? It does not go and come, but we. Shall we wait for it? Is it slower than we?

Feb. 21. I must confess there is nothing so strange to me as my own body. I love any other piece of nature, almost, better.

I was always conscious of sounds in nature which my ears could never hear, — that I caught but the prelude to a strain. She always retreats as I advance. Away behind and behind is she and her meaning. Will not this faith and expectation make to itself ears at length? I never saw to the end, nor heard to the end; but the best part was unseen and unheard.

I am like a feather floating in the atmosphere; on every side is depth unfathomable.

I feel as if years had been crowded into the last month,[2] and yet the regularity of what we call time has been so far preserved as that I[3] . . . will be

[1] [*Week*, p. 303; Riv. 377.]

[2] [Thoreau's brother John died Jan. 11, 1842.]

[3] [Two lines missing from the manuscript here.]

welcome in the present. I have lived ill for the most part because too near myself. I have tripped myself up, so that there was no progress for my own narrowness. I cannot walk conveniently and pleasantly but when I hold myself far off in the horizon. And the soul dilutes the body and makes it passable. My soul and body have tottered along together of late, tripping and hindering one another like unpracticed Siamese twins. They two should walk as one, that no obstacle may be nearer than the firmament.

There must be some narrowness in the soul that compels one to have secrets.

Feb. 23. *Wednesday.* Every poet's muse is circumscribed in her wanderings, and may be well said to haunt some favorite spring or mountain. Chaucer seems to have been the poet of gardens. He has hardly left a poem in which some retired and luxurious retreat of the kind is not described, to which he gains access by some secret port, and there, by some fount or grove, is found his hero and the scene of his tale. It seems as if, by letting his imagination riot in the matchless beauty of an ideal garden, he thus fed [*sic*] his fancy on to the invention of a tale which would fit the scene. The muse of the most universal poet retires into some familiar nook, whence it spies out the land as the eagle from his eyrie, for he who sees so far over plain and forest is perched in a narrow cleft of the crag. Such pure child-like love of Nature is nowhere to be matched.[1] And it is

[1] [*Week*, p. 398; Riv. 492.]

not strange that the poetry of so rude an age should contain such polished praise of Nature; for the charms of Nature are not enhanced by civilization, as society is, but she possesses a permanent refinement, which at last subdues and educates men.

The reader has great confidence in Chaucer. He tells no lies. You read his story with a smile, as if it were the circumlocution of a child, and yet you find that he has spoke with more directness and economy of words than a sage. He is never heartless. So new was all his theme in those days, that [he] had not to invent, but only to tell.[1]

The language of poetry is *infantile*. It cannot talk.

It is the charm and greatness of all society, from friendship to the drawing-room, that it takes place on a level slightly higher than the actual characters of the parties would warrant;[2] it is an expression of faith. True politeness is only hope and trust in men. It never addresses a fallen or falling man, but salutes a rising generation. It does not flatter, but only congratulates. The rays of light come to us in such a curve that every fellow in the street appears higher than he really is. It is the innate civility of nature.[3]

I am glad that it was so because it could be.

March 1. Whatever I learn from any circumstances, that especially I needed to know. Events come out of

[1] [*Week*, p. 397; Riv. 490.] [2] [*Week*, p. 288; Riv. 357.]
[3] [*Week*, p. 288; Riv. 358.]

God, and our characters determine them and constrain fate, as much as they determine the words and tone of a friend to us. Hence are they always acceptable as experience, and we do not see how we could have done without them.

March 2. The greatest impression of character is made by that person who consents to have no character. He who sympathizes with and runs through the whole circle of attributes cannot afford to be an individual. Most men stand pledged to themselves, so that their narrow and confined virtue has no suppleness. They are like children who cannot walk in bad company and learn the lesson which even it teaches, without their guardians, for fear of contamination. He is a fortunate man who gets through the world without being burthened by a name and reputation, for they are at any rate but his past history and no prophecy, and as such concern him no more than another. Character is Genius settled. It can maintain itself against the world, and if it relapses it repents. It is as a dog set to watch the property of Genius. Genius, strictly speaking, is not responsible, for it is not moral.

March 8. I live in the perpetual verdure of the globe. I die in the annual decay of nature.

We can understand the phenomenon of death in the animal better if we first consider it in the order next below us, the vegetable.

The death of the flea and the elephant are but phenomena of the life of nature.

Most lecturers preface their discourses on music with a history of music, but as well introduce an essay on virtue with a history of virtue.[1] As if the possible combinations of sound, the last wind that sighed, or melody that waked the wood, had any history other than a perceptive ear might hear in the least and latest sound of nature! A history of music would be like the history of the future; for so little past is it, and capable of record, that it is but the hint of a prophecy. It is the history of gravitation. It has no history more than God. It circulates and resounds forever, and only flows like the sea or air. There might be a history of men or of hearing, but not of the unheard. Why, if I should sit down to write its story, the west wind would rise to refute me. Properly speaking, there can be no history but natural history, for there is no past in the soul but in nature. So that the history of anything is only the true account of it, which will be always the same. I might as well write the history of my aspirations. Does not the last and highest contain them all? Do the lives of the great composers contain the facts which interested them? What is this music? Why, thinner and more evanescent than ether; subtler than sound, for it is only a disposition of sound. It is to sound what color is to matter. It is the color of a flame, or of the rainbow, or of water. Only one sense has known it. The least profitable, the least tangible fact, which cannot be

[1] [At the head of this paragraph appears the following in pencil:] What has music to do with the lives of the Great Composers? It is the great composer who is not yet dead whose life should be written. Shall we presume to write such a history as the former while the winds blow?

bought or cultivated but by virtuous methods, and yet our ears ring with it like shells left on the shore.

March 11. *Friday.* Chaucer's familiar, but innocent, way of speaking of God is of a piece with his character. He comes readily to his thoughts without any false reverence. If Nature is our mother, is not God much more? God should come into our thoughts with no more parade than the zephyr into our ears. Only strangers approach him with ceremony. How rarely in our English tongue do we find expressed any affection for God! No sentiment is so rare as love of God, — universal love. Herbert is almost the only exception. "Ah, my dear God," etc. Chaucer's was a remarkably affectionate genius. There is less love and simple trust in Shakespeare. When he sees a beautiful person or object, he almost takes a pride in the "maistry" of his God.[1] The Protestant Church seems to have nothing to supply the place of the Saints of the Catholic calendar, who were at least channels for the affections. Its God has perhaps too many of the attributes of a Scandinavian deity.

We can only live healthily the life the gods assign us. I must receive my life as passively as the willow leaf that flutters over the brook. I must not be for myself, but God's work, and that is always good. I will wait the breezes patiently, and grow as Nature shall determine. My fate cannot but be grand so. We may live the life of a plant or an animal, without living an animal life. This constant and universal content of the

[1] [*Week*, pp. 398, 399; Riv. 492.]

animal comes of resting quietly in God's palm. I feel as if [I] could at any time resign my life and the responsibility of living into God's hands, and become as innocent, free from care, as a plant or stone.

My life, my life! why will you linger? Are the years short and the months of no account? How often has long delay quenched my aspirations! Can God afford that I should forget him? Is he so indifferent to my career? Can heaven be postponed with no more ado? Why were my ears given to hear those everlasting strains which haunt my life, and yet to be prophaned much more by these perpetual dull sounds?

Our doubts are so musical that they persuade themselves.

Why, God, did you include me in your great scheme? Will you not make me a partner at last? Did it need there should be a conscious material?

My friend, my friend, I'd speak so frank to thee that thou wouldst pray me to keep back some part, for fear I robbed myself. To address thee delights me, there is such cleanness in the delivery. I am delivered of my tale, which, told to strangers, still would linger on my lips as if untold, or doubtful how it ran.

March 12. Consider what a difference there is between living and dying. To die is not to *begin* to die, and *continue;* it is not a state of continuance, but of transientness; but to live is a condition of continuance, and does not mean to be born merely. There is no

continuance of death. It is a transient phenomenon. Nature presents nothing in a state of death.

March 13. *Sunday.* The sad memory of departed friends is soon incrusted over with sublime and pleasing thoughts, as their monuments are overgrown with moss.[1] Nature doth thus kindly heal every wound. By the mediation of a thousand little mosses and fungi, the most unsightly objects become radiant of beauty. There seem to be two sides to this world, presented us at different times, as we see things in growth or dissolution, in life or death. For seen with the eye of a poet, as God sees them, all are alive and beautiful; but seen with the historical eye, or the eye of the memory, they are dead and offensive. If we see Nature as pausing, immediately all mortifies and decays; but seen as progressing, she is beautiful.

I am startled that God can make me so rich even with my own cheap stores. It needs but a few wisps of straw in the sun, or some small word dropped, or that has long lain silent in some book. When heaven begins and the dead arise, no trumpet is blown; perhaps the south wind will blow. What if you or I be dead! God is alive still.

March 14. Chaucer's genius does not soar like Milton's, but is genial and familiar. It is only a greater portion of humanity, with all its weakness. It is not heroic, as Raleigh, or pious, as Herbert, or philosophical,

[1] [*Week*, p. 303 ; Riv. 377.]

as Shakespeare, but the child of the English nation, but that child that is "father of the man." His genius is only for the most part an exceeding naturalness. It is perfect sincerity, though with the behavior of a child rather than of a man.[1] He can complain, as in the "Testament of Love," but yet so truly and unfeignedly that his complaint does not fail to interest. All England has his case at heart.

He shows great tenderness and delicacy, but not the heroic sentiment. His genius was feminine, not masculine, — not but such is rarest to find in woman (though the appreciation of it is not), — but less manly than the manliest.[2]

It is not easy to find one brave enough to play the game of love quite alone with you, but they must get some third person, or world, to countenance them. They thrust others between. Love is so delicate and fastidious that I see not how [it] can ever begin. Do you expect me to love with you, unless you make my love secondary to nothing else? Your words come tainted, if the thought of the world darted between thee and the thought of me. You are not venturous enough for love. It goes alone unscared through wildernesses.

As soon as I see people loving what they see merely, and not their own high hopes that they form of others, I pity, and do not want their love. Such love delays me. Did I ask thee to love me who hate myself? No! Love that I love, and I will love thee that lovest it.

[1] [*Week*, pp. 397, 398; Riv. 491.]

[2] [*Week*, pp. 397, 398; Riv. 491, 492.]

The love is faint-hearted and short-lived that is contented with the past history of its object. It does not prepare the soil to bear new crops lustier than the old.

"I would I had leisure for these things," sighs the world. "When I have done my quilting and baking, then I will not be backward."

Love never stands still, nor does its object. It is the revolving sun and the swelling bud. If I know what I love, it is because I *remember* it.

Life is grand, and so are its environments of Past and Future. Would the face of nature be so serene and beautiful if man's destiny were not equally so? What am I good for now, who am still marching after high things, but to hear and tell the news, to bring wood and water, and count how many eggs the hens lay? In the meanwhile, I expect my life will begin. I will not aspire longer. I will see what it is I would be after. I will be unanimous.

March 15. *Tuesday.* It is a new day; the sun shines. The poor have come out to employ themselves in the sunshine, the old and feeble to scent the air once more. I hear the bluebird and the song sparrow and the robin, and the note of the lark leaks up through the meadows, as if its bill had been thawed by the warm sun.

As I am going to the woods I think to take some small book in my pocket whose author has been there already, whose pages will be as good as my thoughts, and will eke them out or show me human life still gleaming in the horizon when the woods have shut out the town. But I

can find none. None will sail as far forward into the bay of nature as my thought. They stay at home. I would go home. When I get to the wood their thin leaves rustle in my fingers. They are bare and obvious, and there is no halo or haze about them. Nature lies far and fair behind them all.[1] I should like to meet the great and serene sentence, which does not reveal itself, — only that it is great, — which I may never with my utmost intelligence pierce through and beyond (more than the earth itself), which no intelligence can understand. There should be a kind of life and palpitation to it; under its rind a kind of blood should circulate forever, communicating freshness to its countenance.[2]

Cold Spring. — I hear nothing but a phœbe, and the wind, and the rattling of a chaise in the wood. For a few years I stay here, not knowing, taking my own life by degrees, and then I go. I hear a spring bubbling near, where I drank out of a can in my earliest youth. The birds, the squirrels, the alders, the pines, they seem serene and in their places. I wonder if my life looks as serene to them too. Does no creature, then, see with the eyes of its own narrow destiny, but with God's? When God made man, he reserved some parts and some rights to himself. The eye has many qualities which belong to God more than man. It is his lightning which flashes in it. When I look into my companion's eye, I think it is God's private mine. It is a noble feature; it cannot be degraded; for God can look on all things undefiled.

[1] [*Week*, p. 156; Riv. 195.] [2] [*Week*, p. 157; Riv. 196.]

Pond. — Nature is constantly original and inventing new patterns, like a mechanic in his shop. When the overhanging pine drops into the water, by the action of the sun, and the wind rubbing it on the shore, its boughs are worn white and smooth and assume fantastic forms, as if turned by a lathe.[1] All things, indeed, are subjected to a rotary motion, either gradual and partial or rapid and complete, from the planet and system to the simplest shellfish and pebbles on the beach; as if all beauty resulted from an object turning on its own axis, or others turning about it. It establishes a new centre in the universe. As all curves have reference to their centres or foci, so all beauty of character has reference to the soul, and is a graceful gesture of recognition or waving of the body toward it.

The great and solitary heart will love alone, without the knowledge of its object. It cannot have society in its love. It will expend its love as the cloud drops rain upon the fields over which [it] floats.

The only way to speak the truth is to speak lovingly; only the lover's words are heard. The intellect should never speak; it is not a natural sound. How trivial the best actions are! I am led about from sunrise to sunset by an ignoble routine, and yet can find no better road. I must make a part of the planet. I must obey the law of nature.

March 16. *Wednesday.* Raleigh's Maxims are not true and impartial, but yet are expressed with a certain mag-

[1] [*Week*, pp. 339, 340; Riv. 420.]

nanimity, which was natural to the man, as if this selfish policy could easily afford to give place in him to a more human and generous. He gives such advice that we have more faith in his conduct than his principles.

He seems to have carried the courtier's life to the highest pitch of magnanimity and grace it was capable of. He is liberal and generous as a prince, — that is, within bounds; brave, chivalrous, heroic, as the knight in armor and not as a defenseless man. His was not the heroism of Luther, but of Bayard. There was more of grace than of truth in it. He had more taste than character. There may be something petty in a refined taste; it easily degenerates into effeminacy; it does not consider the broadest use. It is not content with simple good and bad, and so is fastidious and curious, or nice only.

The most attractive sentences are not perhaps the wisest, but the surest and soundest. He who uttered them had a right to speak. He did not stand on a rolling stone, but was well assured of his footing, and naturally breathed them without effort. They were spoken in the nick of time. With rare fullness were they spoken, as a flower expands in the field; and if you dispute their doctrine, you will say, "But there is truth in their assurance." Raleigh's are of this nature, spoken with entire satisfaction and heartiness. They are not philosophy, but poetry.

With him it was always well done and nobly said.

That is very true which Raleigh says about the equal necessity of war and law, — that "the necessity of war,

which among human actions is most lawless, hath some kind of affinity and near resemblance with the necessity of law;" for both equally rest on force as their basis, and war is only the resource of law, either on a smaller or larger scale, — its authority asserted. In war, in some sense, lies the very genius of law. It is law creative and active; it is the first principle of the law. What is human warfare but just this, — an effort to make the laws of God and nature take sides with one party. Men make an arbitrary code, and, because it is not right, they try to make it prevail by might. The moral law does not want any champion. Its asserters do not go to war. It was never infringed with impunity. It is inconsistent to decry war and maintain law, for if there were no need of war there would be no need of law.

I must confess I see no resource but to conclude that conscience was not given us to no purpose, or for a hindrance, but that, however flattering order and expediency may look, it is but the repose of a lethargy; and we will choose rather to be awake, though it be stormy, and maintain ourselves on this earth and in this life as we may, without signing our death-warrant in the outset. What does the law protect? My rights? or any rights? My right, or the right? If I avail myself of it, it may help my sin; it cannot help my virtue. Let us see if we cannot stay here, where God has put us, on his own conditions. Does not his law reach to the earth? While the law holds fast the thief and murderer for my protection (I should say its own), it lets itself go loose. Expediencies differ. They may clash. English law may go to war with Amer-

ican law, that is English interest with American interest, but what is expedient for the whole world will be absolute right, and synonymous with the law of God. So the law is only partial right. It is selfish, and consults for the interest of the few.[1]

Somehow, strangely, the vice of men gets well represented and protected, but their virtue has none to plead its cause, nor any charter of immunities and rights. The Magna Charta is not chartered rights, but chartered wrongs.

March 17. *Thursday.* I have been making pencils all day, and then at evening walked to see an old schoolmate who is going to help make the Welland Canal navigable for ships round Niagara. He cannot see any such motives and modes of living as I; professes not to look beyond the securing of certain "creature comforts." And so we go silently different ways, with all serenity, I in the still moonlight through the village this fair evening to write these thoughts in my journal, and he, forsooth, to mature his schemes to ends as good, maybe, but different. So are we two made, while the same stars shine quietly over us. If I or he be wrong, Nature yet consents placidly. She bites her lip and smiles to see how her children will agree. So does the Welland Canal get built, and other conveniences, while I live. Well and good, I must confess. Fast sailing ships are hence not detained.

What means this changing sky, that now I freeze and contract and go within myself to warm me, and now I

[1] [*Week*, p. 138; Riv. 172, 173.]

say it is a south wind, and go all soft and warm along the way? I sometimes wonder if I do not breathe the south wind.

March 18. *Friday.* Whatever book or sentence will bear to be read twice, we may be sure was thought twice. I say this thinking of Carlyle, who writes pictures or first impressions merely, which consequently will only bear a first reading. As if any transient, any *new*, mood of the best man deserved to detain the world long. I should call Carlyle's writing essentially dramatic, excellent acting, entertaining especially to those who see rather than those who hear, not to be repeated more than a joke. If he did not think who made the joke, how shall we think who hear it? He never consults the oracle, but thinks to utter oracles himself. There is nothing in his books for which he is not, and does not feel, responsible. He does not retire behind the truth he utters, but stands in the foreground. I wish he would just think, and tell me what he thinks, appear to me in the attitude of a man with his ear inclined, who comes as silently and meekly as the morning star, which is unconscious of the dawn it heralds, leading the way up the steep as though alone and unobserved in its observing, without looking behind. He is essentially a humorist. But humors will not feed a man; they are the least satisfactory morsel to the healthy appetite. They circulate; I want rather to meet that about which they circulate. The heart is not a humor, nor do they go to the heart, as the blood does.[1]

[1] [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, p. 336; *Misc.*, Riv. 106, 107.]

March 19. *Saturday.* When I walk in the fields of Concord and meditate on the destiny of this prosperous slip of the Saxon family, the unexhausted energies of this new country, I forget that this which is now Concord was once Musketaquid, and that the *American race* has had its destiny also. Everywhere in the fields, in the corn and grain land, the earth is strewn with the relics of a race which has vanished as completely as if trodden in with the earth. I find it good to remember the eternity behind me as well as the eternity before. Wherever I go, I tread in the tracks of the Indian. I pick up the bolt which he has but just dropped at my feet. And if I consider destiny I am on his trail. I scatter his hearthstones with my feet, and pick out of the embers of his fire the simple but enduring implements of the wigwam and the chase. In planting my corn in the same furrow which yielded its increase to his support so long, I displace some memorial of him.

I have been walking this afternoon over a pleasant field planted with winter rye, near the house, where this strange people once had their dwelling-place. Another species of mortal men, but little less wild to me than the musquash they hunted. Strange spirits, dæmons, whose eyes could never meet mine; with another nature and another fate than mine. The crows flew over the edge of the woods, and, wheeling over my head, seemed to rebuke, as dark-winged spirits more akin to the Indian than I. Perhaps only the present disguise of the Indian. If the new has a meaning, so has the old.[1]

Nature has her russet hues as well as green. Indeed,

[1] [See pp. 443, 444.]

our eye splits on every object, and we can as well take one path as the other. If I consider its history, it is old; if its destiny, it is new. I may see a part of an object, or the whole. I will not be imposed on and think Nature is old because the season is advanced. I will study the botany of the mosses and fungi on the decayed [wood], and remember that decayed wood is not old, but has just begun to be what it is. I need not think of the pine almond [1] or the acorn and sapling when I meet the fallen pine or oak, more than of the generations of pines and oaks which have fed the young tree. The new blade of the corn, the third leaf of the melon, these are not green but gray with time, but sere in respect of time.

The pines and the crows are not changed, but instead that Philip and Paugus stand on the plain, here are Webster and Crockett. Instead of the council-house is the legislature. What a new aspect have new eyes given to the land! Where is this country but in the hearts of its inhabitants? Why, there is only so much of Indian America left as there is of the American Indian in the character of this generation.

A blithe west wind is blowing over all. In the fine flowing haze, men at a distance seem shadowy and gigantic, as ill-defined and great as men should always be. I do not know if yonder be a man or a ghost.

What a consolation are the stars to man! — so high and out of his reach, as is his own destiny. I do not know

[1] [See *Journal*, vol. ii, p. 128.]

but my life is fated to be thus low and grovelling always. I cannot discover its use even to myself. But it is permitted to see those stars in the sky equally useless, yet highest of all and deserving of a fair destiny. My fate is in some sense linked with that of the stars, and if they are to persevere to a great end, shall I die who could conjecture it? It surely is some encouragement to know that the stars are my fellow-creatures, for I do not suspect but they are reserved for a high destiny. Has not he who discovers and names a planet in the heavens as long a year as it? I do not fear that any misadventure will befall *them*. Shall I not be content to disappear with the missing stars? Do I mourn their fate?

Man's moral nature is a riddle which only eternity can solve.

I see laws which never fail, of whose failure I never conceived. Indeed I cannot detect failure anywhere but in my fear. I do not fear that right is not right, that good is not good, but only the annihilation of the present existence. But only that can make me incapable of fear. My fears are as good prophets as my hopes.

March 20. *Sunday.* My friend is cold and reserved because his love for me is waxing and not waning. These are the early processes; the particles are just beginning to shoot in crystals. If the mountains came to me, I should no longer go to the mountains. So soon as that consummation takes place which I wish, it will be past. Shall I not have a friend in reserve? Heaven is to come. I hope this is not it.

Words should pass between friends as the lightning passes from cloud to cloud. I don't know how much I assist in the economy of nature when I declare a fact. Is it not an important part in the history of the flower that I tell my friend where I found it? We do [not] wish friends to feed and clothe our bodies, — neighbors are kind enough for that, — but to do the like offices to ourselves.[1] We wish to spread and publish ourselves, as the sun spreads its rays; and we toss the new thought to the friend, and thus it is dispersed. Friends are those twain who feel their interests to be one. Each knows that the other might as well have said what he said. All beauty, all music, all delight springs from apparent dualism but real unity. My friend is my real brother. I see his nature groping yonder like my own. Does there go one whom I know? then I go there.

The field where friends have met is consecrated forever. Man seeks friendship out of the desire to realize a home here. As the Indian thinks he receives into himself the courage and strength of his conquered enemy, so we add to ourselves all the character and heart of our friends. He is my creation. I can do what I will with him. There is no possibility of being thwarted; the friend is like wax in the rays that fall from our own hearts.

The friend does not take my word for anything, but he takes me. He trusts me as I trust myself. We only need be as true to others as we are to ourselves, that there may be ground enough for friendship. In the beginnings of friendship, — for it does not grow, — we realize such love and justice as are attributed to God.

[1] [*Week*, p. 283; Riv. 351.]

Very few are they from whom we derive any *in*formation. The most only announce and tell tales, but the friend *in*-forms.

What is all nature and human life at this moment, what the scenery and vicinity of a human soul, but the song of an early sparrow from yonder fences, and the cackling hens in the barn? So for one while my destiny loiters within ear-shot of these sounds. The great busy Dame Nature is concerned to know how many eggs her hens lay. The Soul, the proprietor of the world, has an interest in the stacking of hay, the foddering of cattle, and the draining of peat meadows. Away in Scythia, away in India, they make butter and cheese for its larder.[1] I wish that in some page of the Testament there were something like Charlemagne's egg account. Was not Christ interested in the setting hens of Palestine?

Nature is very ample and roomy. She has left us plenty of space to move in. As far as I can see from this window, how little life in the landscape! The few birds that flit past do not crowd; they do not fill the valley. The traveller on the highway has no fellow-traveller for miles before or behind him. Nature was generous and not niggardly, certainly.

How simple is the natural connection of events. We complain greatly of the want of flow and sequence in books, but if the journalist only move himself from Boston to New York, and speak as before, there is link enough. And so there would be, if he were as careless of connection and order when he stayed at home, and

[1] [*Week*, pp. 130, 131; Riv. 163.]

let the incessant progress which his life makes be the apology for abruptness. Do I not travel as far away from my old resorts, though I stay here at home, as though I were on board the steamboat? Is not my life riveted together? Has not it sequence? Do not my breathings follow each other naturally?

March 21.[1] Who is old enough to have learned from experience?

March 22. *Tuesday.* Nothing can be more useful to a man than a determination not to be hurried.

I have not succeeded if I have an antagonist who fails. It must be humanity's success.

I cannot think nor utter my thought unless I have infinite room. The cope of heaven is not too high, the sea is not too deep, for him who would unfold a great thought. It must feed me and warm and clothe me. It must be an entertainment to which my whole nature is invited. I must know that the gods are to be my fellow-guests.

We cannot well do without our sins; they are the highway of our virtue.

March 23. *Wednesday.* Plain speech is always a desideratum. Men write in a florid style only because they

[1] Set the red hen, Sunday, March 21st [=20th]. [This memorandum is written in the margin. It is pretty good proof that by now we have come to the original Journal. Just where the transcripts end, however, it seems to be impossible to determine.]

would match the simple beauties of the plainest speech. They prefer to be misunderstood, rather than come short of its exuberance. Hussein Effendi praises the epistolary style of Ibrahim Pasha to the French traveller Botta, because of "the difficulty of understanding it: there was, he said, but one person at Jidda who was capable of understanding and explaining the Pasha's correspondence." A plain sentence, where every word is rooted in the soil, is indeed flowery and verdurous. It has the beauty and variety of mosaic with the strength and compactness of masonry. All fullness looks like exuberance. We are not rich without superfluous wealth; but the imitator only copies the superfluity. If the words were sufficiently simple and answering to the thing to be expressed, our sentences would be as blooming as wreaths of evergreen and flowers.[1] You cannot fill a wine-glass quite to the brim without heaping it. Simplicity is exuberant.

When I look back eastward over the world, it seems to be all in repose. Arabia, Persia, Hindostan are the land of contemplation. Those Eastern nations have perfected the luxury of idleness. Mount Sabér, according to the French traveller and naturalist Botta, is celebrated for producing the Kát tree. "The soft tops of the twigs and tender leaves are eaten," says his reviewer, "and produce an agreeable soothing excitement, restoring from fatigue, banishing sleep, and disposing to the enjoyment of conversation." What could be more dignified than to browse the tree-tops with the camelopard? Who would not be a rabbit or partridge some-

[1] [*Week*, p. 107; Riv. 133.]

times, to chew mallows and pick the apple tree buds? It is not hard to discover an instinct for the opium and betel and tobacco chewers.[1]

After all, I believe it is the style of thought entirely, and not the style of expression, which makes the difference in books. For if I find any thought worth extracting, I do not wish to alter the language. Then the author seems to have had all the graces of eloquence and poetry given him.

I am pleased to discover myself as much a pensioner in Nature as moles and titmice. In some very direct and simple uses to which man puts Nature he stands in this relation to her. Oriental life does not want this grandeur. It is in Sadi and the Arabian Nights and the Fables of Pilpay. In the New England noontide I have discovered more materials of Oriental history than the Sanskrit contains or Sir W. Jones has unlocked. I see why it is necessary there should be such history at all. Was not Asia mapped in my brain before it was in any geography? In my brain is the Sanskrit which contains the history of the primitive times. The Vedas and their Angas are not so ancient as my serenest contemplations.[2] My mind contemplates them, as Brahma his scribe.

I occasionally find myself to be nothing at all, because the gods give me nothing to do. I cannot brag; I can only congratulate my masters.

In idleness I am of no thickness, I am thinnest wafer. I never compass my own ends. God schemes for me.

[1] [*Week*, p. 130; Riv. 162.] [2] [*Week*, p. 160; Riv. 199.]

We have our times of action and our times of reflection. The one mood caters for the other. Now I am Alexander, and then I am Homer. One while my hand is impatient to handle an axe or hoe, and at another to [*sic*] pen. I am sure I write the tougher truth for these calluses on my palms. They give firmness to the sentence. The sentences of a laboring man are like hardened thongs, or the sinews of the deer, or the roots of the pine.[1]

March 24. Thursday. Those authors are successful who do not *write down* to others, but make their own taste and judgment their audience. By some strange infatuation we forget that we do not approve what yet we recommend to others. It is enough if I please myself with writing; I am then sure of an audience.

If hoarded treasures can make me rich, have I not the wealth of the planet in my mines and at the bottom of the sea?

It is always singular to meet common sense in very old books, as the Veeshnoo Sarma, — as if they could have dispensed with the experience of later times.[2] We had not given space enough to *their* antiquity for the accumulation of wisdom. We meet even a trivial wisdom in them, as if truth were already hackneyed. The present is always younger than antiquity. A playful wisdom, which has eyes behind as well as before and oversees itself. This pledge of sanity cannot be spared

[1] [*Week*, p. 109; Riv. 135, 136.] [2] [*Week*, p. 153; Riv. 191.]

in a book, that it sometimes reflect upon itself, that it pleasantly behold itself, that it hold the scales over itself.[1] The wise can afford to doubt in his wisest moment. The easiness of doubt is the ground of his assurance. Faith keeps many doubts in her pay. If I could not doubt, I should not believe.

It is seen in this old scripture how wisdom is older than the talent of composition. It is a simple and not a compound rock. The story is as slender as the thread on which pearls are strung; it is a spiral line, growing more and more perplexed till it winds itself up and dies like the silkworm in its cocoon. It is an interminable labyrinth. It seems as if the old philosopher could not talk without moving, and each motion were made the apology or occasion for a sentence, but, this being found inconvenient, the fictitious progress of the tale was invented. The story which winds between and around these sentences, these barrows in the desert, these oases, is as indistinct as a camel track between Mourzuk and Darfur, between the Pyramids and the Nile, from Gaza to Jaffa.[2]

The great thoughts of a wise man seem to the vulgar who do not generalize to stand far apart like isolated mounts; but science knows that the mountains which rise so solitary in our midst are parts of a great mountain-chain, dividing the earth, and the eye that looks into the horizon toward the blue Sierra melting away in the distance may detect their flow of thought. These sentences which take up your common life so easily are not seen to run into ridges, because they are the table-land on

[1] [*Week*, p. 153; Riv. 191.] [2] [*Week*, p. 153; Riv. 191.]

which the spectator stands.[1] I do not require that the mountain-peaks be chained together, but by the common basis on which they stand, nor that the path of the muleteer be kept open at so much pains, when they may be bridged by the Milky Way. That they stand frowning upon one another, or mutually reflecting the sun's rays, is proof enough of their common basis.

The book should be found where the sentence is, and its connection be as inartificial. It is the inspiration of a day and not of a moment. The links should be gold also. Better that the good be not united than that a bad man be admitted into their society. When men can select they will. If there be any stone in the quarry better than the rest, they will forsake the rest because of it. Only the good will be quarried.

In these fables the story goes unregarded, while the reader leaps from sentence to sentence, as the traveller leaps from stone to stone while the water rushes unheeded between them.[2]

March 25. Friday. Great persons are not soon learned, not even their outlines, but they change like the mountains in the horizon as we ride along.

A man's life should be as fresh as a river. It should be the same channel, but a new water every instant.[3] Some men have no inclination; they have no rapids nor cascades, but marshes, and alligators, and miasma instead.[4]

[1] [*Week*, p. 105; Riv. 130.]
[2] [*Week*, p. 153; Riv. 191.]
[3] [See pp. 295, 296.]
[4] [*Week*, p. 137; Riv. 170.]

How insufficient is all wisdom without love! There may be courtesy, there may be good will, there may be even temper, there may be wit, and talent, and sparkling conversation, — and yet the soul pine for life. Just so sacred and rich as my life is to myself will it be to another. Ignorance and bungling with love are better than wisdom and skill without. Our life without love is like coke and ashes, — like the cocoanut in which the milk is dried up. I want to see the sweet sap of living wood in it. Men may be pure as alabaster and Parian marble, elegant as a Tuscan villa, sublime as Terni, but if they are not in society as retiring and inexperienced as children, we shall go join Alaric and the Goths and Vandals. There is no milk mixed with the wine at the entertainment.[1]

Enthusiasm which is the formless material of thought. Comparatively speaking, I care not for the man or his designs who would make the highest use of me short of an all-adventuring friendship. I wish by the behavior of my friend toward me to be led to have such regard for myself as for a box of precious ointment. I shall not be so cheap to myself if I see that another values me.

We talk much about education, and yet none will assume the office of an educator. I never gave any one the whole advantage of myself. I never afforded him the culture of my love. How can I talk of charity, who at last withhold the kindness which alone makes charity desirable? The poor want nothing less than me myself, and I shirk charity by giving rags and meat.

[1] [*Week*, p. 301; Riv. 374, 375.]

Very dangerous is the talent of composition, the striking out the heart of life at a blow, as the Indian takes off a scalp. I feel as if my life had grown more outward since I could express it.[1]

What can I give or what deny to another but myself?

The stars are God's dreams, thoughts remembered in the silence of his night.

In company, that person who alone can understand you you cannot get out of your mind.

The artist must work with indifferency. Too great interest vitiates his work.

March 26. *Saturday.* The wise will not be imposed on by wisdom. You can tell, but what do you know?

I thank God that the cheapness which appears in time and the world, the trivialness of the whole scheme of things, is in my own cheap and trivial moment. I am time and the world. I assert no independence. In me are summer and winter, village life and commercial routine, pestilence and famine and refreshing breezes, joy and sadness, life and death. How near is yesterday! How far to-morrow! I have seen nails which were driven before I was born. Why do they look old and rusty? Why does not God make some mistake to show to us that time is a delusion? Why did I invent time but to destroy it?

Did you ever remember the moment when you were not mean?

Is it not a satire to say that life is organic?

[1] [*Week*, p. 351; Riv. 434.]

Where is my heart gone? They say men cannot part with it and live.

Are setting hens troubled with ennui? Nature is very kind; does she let them reflect? These long March days, setting on and on in the crevice of a hayloft, with no active employment![1] Do setting hens sleep?

A book should be a vein of gold ore, as the sentence is a diamond found in the sand, or a pearl fished out of the sea.

He who does not borrow trouble does not lend it.

I must confess I have felt mean enough when asked how I was to act on society, what errand I had to mankind. Undoubtedly I did not feel mean without a reason, and yet my loitering is not without defense. I would fain communicate the wealth of my life to men, would really give them what is most precious in my gift. I would secrete pearls with the shellfish and lay up honey with the bees for them. I will sift the sunbeams for the public good. I know no riches I would keep back. I have no private good, unless it be my peculiar ability to serve the public. This is the only individual property. Each one may thus be innocently rich. I inclose and foster the pearl till it is grown. I wish to communicate those parts of my life which I would gladly live again myself.

It is hard to be a good citizen of the world in any great sense; but if we do render no interest or increase to mankind out of that talent God gave us, we can at

[1] [*Week*, p. 130; Riv. 163.]

least preserve the principle unimpaired. One would like to be making large dividends to society out [of] that deposited capital in us, but he does well for the most part if he proves a secure investment only, without adding to the stock.

In such a letter as I like there will be the most naked and direct speech, the least circumlocution.

March 27. *Sunday.* The eye must be firmly anchored to this earth which beholds birches and pines waving in the breeze in a certain light, a serene rippling light.

Cliffs. — Two little hawks have just come out to play, like butterflies rising one above the other in endless alternation far below me. They swoop from side to side in the broad basin of the tree-tops, with wider and wider surges, as if swung by an invisible pendulum. They stoop down on this side and scale up on that.

Suddenly I look up and see a new bird, probably an eagle, quite above me, laboring with the wind not more than forty rods off. It was the largest bird of the falcon kind I ever saw. I was never so impressed by any flight. She sailed the air, and fell back from time to time like a ship on her beam ends, holding her talons up as if ready for the arrows. I never allowed before for the grotesque attitudes of our national bird.[1]

The eagle must have an educated eye.

See what a life the gods have given us, set round with pain and pleasure. It is too strange for sorrow; it is too

[1] [In *Excursions*, p. 110 (Riv. 136), what appears to be the same bird is described, and is called the fish hawk.]

strange for joy. One while it looks as shallow, though as intricate, as a Cretan labyrinth, and again it is a pathless depth. I ask for bread incessantly, — that my life sustain me, as much as meat my body. No man knoweth in what hour his life may come. Say not that Nature is trivial, for to-morrow she will be radiant with beauty. I am as old — as old as the Alleghanies. I was going to say Wachusett, but it excites a youthful feeling, as I were but too happy to be so young.

March 28. *Monday.* How often must one feel, as he looks back on his past life, that he has gained a talent but lost a character! My life has got down into my fingers. My inspiration at length is only so much breath as I can breathe.

Society affects to estimate men by their talents, but really feels and knows them by their characters. What a man does, compared with what he is, is but a small part. To require that our friend possess a certain skill is not to be satisfied till he is something less than our friend.

Friendship should be a great promise, a perennial springtime.

I can conceive how the life of the gods may be dull and tame, if it is not disappointed and insatiate.

One may well feel chagrined when he finds he can do nearly all he can conceive.

Some books ripple on like a stream, and we feel that the author is in the full tide of discourse. Plato and Jamblichus and Pythagoras and Bacon halt beside

them. Long, stringy, slimy thoughts which flow or run together. They read as if written for military men or men of business, there is such a dispatch in them, and a double-quick time, a Saratoga march with beat of drum. But the grave thinkers and philosophers seem not to have got their swaddling-clothes off; they are slower than a Roman army on its march, the rear encampment to-night where the van camped last night. The wise Jamblichus eddies and gleams like a watery slough.

But the reviewer seizes the pen and shouts, "Forward! Alamo and Fanning!" and after rolls the tide of war. Immediately the author discovers himself launched, and if the slope was easy and the grease good, does not go to the bottom.

They flow as glibly as mill-streams sucking under a race-way. The flow is ofttimes in the poor reader who makes such haste over their pages, as to the traveller the walls and fences seem to travel. But the most rapid trot is no flow after all.[1]

If I cannot chop wood in the yard, can I not chop wood in my journal? Can I not give vent to that appetite so? I wish to relieve myself of superfluous energy. How poor is the life of the best and wisest! The petty side will appear at last. Understand once how the best in society live, — with what routine, with what tedium and insipidity, with what grimness and defiance, with what chuckling over an exaggeration of the sunshine. Altogether, are not the actions of your great man poor, even pitiful and ludicrous?

[1] [*Week*, pp. 105, 106; Riv. 131, 132.]

I am astonished, I must confess, that man looks so respectable in nature, considering the littlenesses Socrates must descend to in the twenty-four hours, that he yet wears a serene countenance and even adorns nature.

March 29. *Tuesday.*

March 30. *Wednesday.* Though Nature's laws are more immutable than any despot's, yet to our daily life they rarely seem rigid, but we relax with license in summer weather. We are not often nor harshly reminded of the things we may not do. I am often astonished to see how long, and with what manifold infringements of the natural laws, some men I meet in the highway maintain life. She does not deny them quarter; they do not die without priest. All the while she rejoices, for if they are not one part of her they are another. I am convinced that consistency is the secret of health. How many a poor man, striving to live a pure life, pines and dies after a life of sickness, and his successors doubt if Nature is not pitiless; while the confirmed and consistent sot, who is content with his rank life like mushrooms, a mass of corruption, still dozes comfortably under a hedge. He has made his peace with himself; there is no strife. Nature is really very kind and liberal to all persons of vicious habits. They take great licenses with her. She does not exhaust them with many excesses.[1]

How hard it is to be greatly related to mankind! They are only my uncles and aunts and cousins. I hear

[1] [*Week*, pp. 34, 35; Riv. 42, 43.]

of some persons greatly related, but only he is so who has all mankind for his friend. Our intercourse with the best grows soon shallow and trivial. They no longer inspire us. After enthusiasm comes insipidity and blankness. The sap of all noble schemes drieth up, and the schemers return again and again in despair to "common sense and labor." If I could help infuse some life and heart into society, should I not do a service? Why will not the gods mix a little of the wine of nobleness with the air we drink? Let virtue have some firm foothold in the earth. Where does she dwell? Who are the salt of the earth? May not Love have some resting-place on the earth as sure [as] the sunshine on the rock? The crystals imbedded in the cliff sparkle and gleam from afar, as if they did certainly enrich our planet; but where does any virtue permanently sparkle and gleam? She was sent forth over the waste too soon, before the earth was prepared for her.

Rightfully we are to each other the gate of heaven and redeemers from sin, but now we overlook these lowly and narrow ways. We will go over the bald mountain-tops without going through the valleys.

Men do not after all meet on the ground of their real acquaintance and actual understanding of one another, but degrade themselves immediately into the puppets of convention. They do as if, in given circumstances, they had agreed to know each other only so well. They rarely get to that [point] that they inform one another gratuitously, and use each other like the sea and woods for what is new and inspiring there.

The best intercourse and communion they have is in silence above and behind their speech. We should be very simple to rely on words. As it is, what we knew before always interprets a man's words. I cannot easily remember what any man has said, but how can I forget what he is to me? We know each other better than we are aware; we are admitted to startling privacies with every person we meet, and in some emergency we shall find how well we knew him. To my solitary and distant thought my neighbor is shorn of his halo, and is seen as privately and barely as a star through a glass.

March 31. *Thursday.* I cannot forget the majesty of that bird at the Cliff. It was no sloop or smaller craft hove in sight, but a ship of the line, worthy to struggle with the elements. It was a great presence, as of the master of river and forest. His eye would not have quailed before the owner of the soil; none could challenge his rights. And then his retreat, sailing so steadily away, was a kind of advance. How is it that man always feels like an interloper in nature, as if he had intruded on the domains of bird and beast? [1]

The really efficient laborer will be found not to crowd his day with work, but will saunter to his task surrounded by a wide halo of ease and leisure. There will be a wide margin for relaxation to his day. He is only earnest to secure the kernels of time, and does not exaggerate the value of the husk. Why should the hen set all day? She can lay but one egg, and besides she will

[1] [*Excursions*, p. 110; Riv. 136.]

not have picked up materials for a new one. Those who work much do not work hard.[1]

Nothing is so rare as sense. Very uncommon sense is poetry, and has a heroic or sweet music. But in verse, for the most part, the music now runs before and then behind the sense, but is never coincident with it. Given the metre, and one will make music while another makes sense. But good verse, like a good soldier, will make its own music, and it will march to the same with one consent. In most verse there is no inherent music. The man should not march, but walk like a citizen. It is not time of war but peace. Boys study the metres to write Latin verses, but it does not help them to write English.

Lydgate's "Story of Thebes," intended for a Canterbury Tale, is a specimen of most unprogressive, unmusical verse. Each line rings the knell of its brother, as if it were introduced but to dispose of him. No mortal man could have breathed to that cadence without long intervals of relaxation; the repetition would have been fatal to the lungs. No doubt there was much healthy exercise taken in the meanwhile. He should forget his rhyme and tell his story, or forget his story and breathe himself.

In Shakespeare and elsewhere the climax may be somewhere along the line, which runs as varied and meandering as a country road, but in Lydgate it is nowhere but in the rhyme. The couplets slope headlong to their confluence.

[1] [*Week*, p. 110; Riv. 137.]

April 2. *Saturday.*[1] The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales is full of good sense and humanity, but is not transcendent poetry. It is so good that it seems like faultfinding to esteem it second to any other. For picturesque description of persons it is without a parallel. It did not need inspiration, but a cheerful and easy wit. It is essentially humorous, as no inspired poetry is. Genius is so serious as to be grave and sublime rather. Humor takes a narrower vision — however broad and genial it may be — than enthusiasm. Humor delays and looks back.[2]

April 3. *Sunday.* I can remember when I was more enriched by a few cheap rays of light falling on the pond-side than by this broad sunny day. Riches have wings, indeed. The weight of present woe will express the sweetness of past experience. When sorrow comes, how easy it is to remember pleasure! When, in winter, the bees cannot make new honey, they consume the old.

Experience is in the fingers and head. The heart is inexperienced.

Sorrow singeth the sweetest strain: "The Daughters of Zion," "The Last Sigh of the Moor."

Joy is the nectar of flowers, sorrow the honey of bees.

I thank God for sorrow. It is hard to be abused. Is not He kind still, who lets this south wind blow, this warm sun shine on me?

[1] [On the margin of this page appears the memorandum: "Set the gray hen April 1st."]

[2] [*Week*, p. 397; Riv. 490, 491.]

I have just heard the flicker among the oaks on the hillside ushering in a new dynasty. It is the age and youth of time. Why did Nature set this lure for sickly mortals? Eternity could not begin with more security and momentousness than the spring. The summer's eternity is reëstablished by this note.[1] All sights and sounds are seen and heard both in time and eternity. And when the eternity of any sight or sound strikes the eye or ear, they are intoxicated with delight.

Sometimes, as through a dim haze, we see objects in their eternal relations; and they stand like Stonehenge and the Pyramids, and we wonder who set them up and what for.

The destiny of the soul can never be studied by the reason, for its modes are not ecstatic. In the wisest calculation or demonstration I but play a game with myself. I am not to be taken captive by myself.

I cannot convince myself. God must convince. I can calculate a problem in arithmetic, but not any morality.

Virtue is incalculable, as it is inestimable. Well, man's destiny is but virtue, or manhood. It is wholly moral, to be learned only by the life of the soul. God cannot calculate it. He has no moral philosophy, no ethics. The reason, before it can be applied to such a subject, will have to fetter and restrict it. How can he, step by step, perform that long journey who has not conceived whither he is bound? How can he expect to perform an arduous journey without interruption who has no passport to the end?

[1] [*Excursions*, p. 111; Riv. 137.]

On one side of man is the actual, and on the other the ideal. The former is the province of the reason; it is even a divine light when directed upon it, but it cannot reach forward into the ideal without blindness. The moon was made to rule by night, but the sun to rule by day. Reason will be but a pale cloud, like the moon, when one ray of divine light comes to illumine the soul.

How rich and lavish must be the system which can afford to let so many moons burn all the day as well as the night, though no man stands in need of their light! There is none of that kind of economy in Nature that husbands its stock, but she supplies inexhaustible means to the most frugal methods. The poor may learn of her frugality, and the rich generosity. Having carefully determined the extent of her charity, she establishes it forever; her almsgiving is an annuity. She supplies to the bee only so much wax as is necessary for its cell, so that no poverty could stint it more; but the little economist which fed the Evangelist in the desert still keeps in advance of the immigrant, and fills the cavities of the forest for his repast.

VII

1845–1846

(ÆT. 27–29)

July 5. Saturday. Walden. — Yesterday I came here to live. My house makes me think of some mountain houses I have seen, which seemed to have a fresher auroral atmosphere about them, as I fancy of the halls of Olympus. I lodged at the house of a saw-miller last summer, on the Caatskill Mountains, high up as Pine Orchard, in the blueberry and raspberry region, where the quiet and cleanliness and coolness seemed to be all one, — which had their ambrosial character. He was the miller of the Kaaterskill Falls. They were a clean and wholesome family, inside and out, like their house. The latter was not plastered, only lathed, and the inner doors were not hung. The house seemed high-placed, airy, and perfumed, fit to entertain a travelling god. It was so high, indeed, that all the music, the broken strains, the waifs and accompaniments of tunes, that swept over the ridge of the Caatskills, passed through its aisles. Could not man be man in such an abode? And would he ever find out this grovelling life?[1] It was the very light and atmosphere in which the works of Grecian art were composed, and in which they rest. They have appropriated to themselves a loftier hall than mortals ever occupy, at least on a level with the moun-

[1] [*Walden*, p. 94; Riv. 134.]

tain-brows of the world. There was wanting a little of the glare of the lower vales, and in its place a pure twilight as became the precincts of heaven. Yet so equable and calm was the season there that you could not tell whether it was morning or noon or evening. Always there was the sound of the morning cricket.

July 6. I wish to meet the facts of life — the vital facts, which are the phenomena or actuality the gods meant to show us — face to face, and so I came down here. Life! who knows what it is, what it does? If I am not quite right here, I am less wrong than before; and now let us see what they will have. The preacher, instead of vexing the ears of drowsy farmers on their day of rest, at the end of the week, — for Sunday always seemed to me like a fit conclusion of an ill-spent week and not the fresh and brave beginning of a new one, — with this one other draggletail and postponed affair of a sermon, from thirdly to fifteenthly, should teach them with a thundering voice pause and simplicity. "Stop! Avast! Why so fast?" [1] In all studies we go not forward but rather backward with redoubled pauses. We always study *antiques* with silence and reflection. Even time has a depth, and below its surface the waves do not lapse and roar. I wonder men can be so frivolous almost as to attend to the gross form of negro slavery, there are so many keen and subtle masters who subject us both. Self-emancipation in the West Indies of a man's thinking and imagining provinces, which should be more than his island territory, — one emancipated heart

[1] [*Walden*, p. 106; Riv. 150.]

and intellect! It would knock off the fetters from a million slaves.

July 7. I am glad to remember to-night, as I sit by my door, that I too am at least a remote descendant of that heroic race of men of whom there is tradition. I too sit here on the shore of my Ithaca, a fellow-wanderer and survivor of Ulysses. How symbolical, significant of I know not what, the pitch pine stands here before my door! Unlike any glyph I have seen sculptured or painted yet, one of Nature's later designs, yet perfect as her Grecian art. There it is, a done tree. Who can mend it? And now where is the generation of heroes whose lives are to pass amid these our northern pines, whose exploits shall appear to posterity pictured amid these strong and shaggy forms? Shall there be only arrows and bows to go with these pines on some pipe-stone quarry at length? There is something more respectable than railroads in these simple relics of the Indian race. What hieroglyphs shall we add to the pipe-stone quarry?

If we can forget, we have done somewhat; if we can remember, we have done somewhat. Let us remember this.

The Great Spirit makes indifferent all times and places. The place where he is seen is always the same, and indescribably pleasant to all our senses. We had allowed only neighboring and transient circumstances to make our occasions. They were, in fact, the causes of our distractions. But nearest to all things is that power

which fashions their being. Next to us the grandest laws are being enacted and administered. Next to us is not the workman whom we have hired, but ever the workman whose work we are. He is at work, not in my backyard, but inconceivably nearer than that. We are the subjects of an experiment how singular! Can we not dispense with the society of our gossips a little while under these circumstances?

My auxiliaries are the dews and rains, — to water this dry soil, — and genial fatness in the soil itself, which for the most part is lean and effete. My enemies are worms, cool days, and most of all woodchucks. They have nibbled for me an eighth of an acre clean. I plant in faith, and they reap. This is the tax I pay for ousting johnswort and the rest. But soon the surviving beans will be too tough for woodchucks, and then they will go forward to meet new foes.[1]

July 14. What sweet and tender, the most innocent and divinely encouraging society there is in every natural object, and so in universal nature, even for the poor misanthrope and most melancholy man! There can be no really black melan-choly to him who lives in the midst of nature and has still his senses. There never was yet such a storm but it was Æolian music to the innocent ear. Nothing can compel to a vulgar sadness a simple and brave man. While I enjoy the sweet friendship of the seasons I trust that nothing can make life a burden to me. This rain which is now watering my

[1] [*Walden*, pp. 171, 172; Riv. 242.]

beans and keeping me in the house waters me too. I needed it as much. And what if most are not hoed! Those who send the rain, whom I chiefly respect, will pardon me.[1]

Sometimes, when I compare myself with other men, methinks I am favored by the gods. They seem to whisper joy to me beyond my deserts, and that I do have a solid warrant and surety at their hands, which my fellows do not. I do not flatter myself, but if it were possible *they* flatter me. I am especially guided and guarded.[2]

What was seen true once, and sanctioned by the flash of Jove, will always be true, and nothing can hinder it. I have the warrant that no fair dream I have had need fail of its fulfillment.

Here I know I am in good company; here is the world, its centre and metropolis, and all the palms of Asia and the laurels of Greece and the firs of the Arctic Zone incline thither. Here I can read Homer, if I would have books, as well as in Ionia, and not wish myself in Boston, or New York, or London, or Rome, or Greece. In such place as this he wrote or sang. Who should come to my lodge just now but a true Homeric boor, one of those Paphlagonian men? Alek Therien, he called himself; a Canadian now, a woodchopper, a post-maker; makes fifty posts — holes them, *i. e.* — in a day; and who made his last supper on a woodchuck which his dog caught. And he too has heard of Homer, and *if it were not for books, would not know what to do* rainy days. Some priest once, who could read glibly

[1] [*Walden*, p. 145 ; Riv. 205.] [2] [*Walden*, pp. 145, 146 ; Riv. 206.]

from the Greek itself, taught him reading in a measure — his verse, at least, in his turn — away by the Trois Rivières, at Nicolet. And now I must read to him, while he holds the book, Achilles' reproof of Patroclus on his sad countenance.

"Why are you in tears, Patroclus, like a young child (girl)?" etc., etc.

> "Or have you only heard some news from Phthia?
> They say that Menœtius lives yet, son of Actor,
> And Peleus lives, son of Æacus, among the Myrmidons,
> Both of whom having died, we should greatly grieve."

He has a neat [1] bundle of white oak bark under his arm for a sick man, gathered this Sunday morning. "I suppose there's no harm in going after such a thing to-day." [2] The simple man. May the gods send him many woodchucks.

And earlier to-day came five Lestrigones, railroad men who take care of the road, some of them at least. They still represent the bodies of men, transmitting arms and legs and bowels downward from those remote days to more remote. They have some got a rude wisdom withal, thanks to their dear experience. And one with them, a handsome younger man, a sailor-like, Greek-like man, says: "Sir, I like your notions. I think I shall live so myself. Only I should like a wilder country, where there is more game. I have been among the Indians near Appalachicola. I have lived with them. I like your kind of life. Good day. I wish you success and happiness."

[1] [Plainly "neat" in Journal, though *Walden* has "great."]

[2] [*Walden*, pp. 159, 160; Riv. 224, 225.]

Therien said this morning (July 16th, Wednesday), "If those beans were mine, I should n't like to hoe them till the dew was off." He was going to his woodchopping. "Ah!" said I, "that is one of the notions the farmers have got, but I don't believe it." "How thick the pigeons are!" said he. "If working every day were not my trade, I could get all the meat I should want by hunting, — pigeons, woodchucks, rabbits, partridges, — by George! I could get all I should want for a week in one day." [1]

I imagine it to be some advantage to live a primitive and frontier life, though in the midst of an outward civilization. Of course all the improvements of the ages do not carry a man backward nor forward in relation to the great facts of his existence.[2]

Our furniture should be as simple as the Arab's or the Indian's.[3] At first the thoughtful, wondering man plucked in haste the fruits which the boughs extended to him, and found in the sticks and stones around him his implements ready to crack the nut, to wound the beast, and build his house with. And he still remembered that he was a sojourner in nature. When he was refreshed with food and sleep he contemplated his journey again. He dwelt in a tent in this world. He was either threading the valleys, or crossing the plains, or climbing the mountain-tops.[4]

Now the best works of art serve comparatively but

[1] [*Walden*, p. 161; Riv. 227.]
[2] [*Walden*, pp. 12, 13; Riv. 21.]
[3] [*Walden*, p. 39; Riv. 59.]
[4] [*Walden*, p. 41; Riv. 61.]

to dissipate the mind, for they themselves represent transitionary and paroxysmal, not free and absolute, thoughts.

Men have become the tools of their tools. The man who independently plucked the fruits when he was hungry is become a farmer.[1]

There are scores of pitch pines in my field, from one to three inches in diameter, girdled by the mice last winter. A Norwegian winter it was for them, for the snow lay long and deep, and they had to mix much pine meal with their usual diet. Yet these trees have not many of them died, even in midsummer, and laid bare for a foot, but have grown a foot. They seem to do all their gnawing beneath the snow. There is not much danger of the mouse tribe becoming extinct in hard winters, for their granary is a cheap and extensive one.[2]

Here is one has had her nest under my house, and came when I took my luncheon to pick the crumbs at my feet. It had never seen the race of man before, and so the sooner became familiar. It ran over my shoes and up my pantaloons inside, clinging to my flesh with its sharp claws. It would run up the side of the room by short impulses like a squirrel, which [it] resembles, coming between the house mouse and the former. Its belly is a little reddish, and its ears a little longer. At length, as I leaned my elbow on the bench, it ran over my arm and round the paper which contained my dinner. And when I held it a piece of cheese, it came and

[1] [*Walden*, p. 41; Riv. 61.] [2] [*Walden*, p. 309; Riv. 433.]

nibbled between my fingers, and then cleaned its face and paws like a fly.[1]

There is a memorable interval between the written and the spoken language, the language read and the language heard. The one is transient, a sound, a tongue, a dialect, and all men learn it of their mothers. It is loquacious, fragmentary, — raw material. The other is a reserved, select, matured expression, a deliberate word addressed to the ear of nations and generations. The one is natural and convenient, the other divine and instructive. The clouds flit here below, genial, refreshing with their showers and gratifying with their tints, — alternate sun and shade, a grosser heaven adapted to our trivial wants; but above them repose the blue firmament and the stars. The stars are written words and stereotyped on the blue parchment of the skies; the fickle clouds that hide them from our view, which we on this side need, though heaven does not, these are our daily colloquies, our vaporous, garrulous breath.

Books must be read as deliberately and reservedly as they were written. The herd of men, the generations who speak the Greek and Latin, are not entitled by the accident of birth to read the works of genius, whose mother tongue speaks everywhere, and is learned by every child who hears. The army of the Greeks and Latins are not coæternary, though contemporary, with Homer and Plato, Virgil and Cicero. In the transition ages, nations who loudest spoke the Greek and Latin tongues, whose mother's milk they were, learned not

[1] [*Walden*, p. 250; Riv. 351.]

their nobler dialects, but a base and vulgar speech. The men of the Middle Ages who spoke so glibly the language of the Roman and, in the Eastern Empire, of the Athenian mob, prized only a cheap contemporary learning. The classics of both languages were virtually lost and forgotten. When, after the several nations of Europe had acquired in some degree rude and original languages of their own, sufficient for the arts of life and conversation, then the few scholars beheld with advantage from this more distant standpoint the treasures of antiquity, and a new Latin age commenced, the era of reading. Those works of genius were then first classical. All those millions who had spoken Latin and Greek had not read Latin and Greek. The time had at length arrived for the written word, the *scripture*, to be heard. What the multitude could not *hear*, after the lapse of centuries a few scholars *read*. This is the matured thought which was not spoken in the market-place, unless it be in a market-place where the free genius of mankind resorts to-day. There is something very choice and select in a written word. No wonder Alexander carried his Homer in a precious casket on his expeditions. A word which may be translated into every dialect, and suggests a truth to every mind, is the most perfect work of human art; and as it may be breathed and taken on our lips, and, as it were, become the product of our physical organs, as its sense is of our intellectual, it is the nearest to life itself.[1] It is the simplest and purest channel by which a revelation may be transmitted from age to age. How it subsists itself whole and undiminished till the

[1] [*Walden*, pp. 112–114; Riv. 159–161.]

intelligent reader is born to decipher it! There are the tracks of Zoroaster, of Confucius and Moses, indelible in the sands of the remotest times.

There are no monuments of antiquity comparable to the classics for interest and importance. It does not need that the scholar should be an antiquarian, for these works of art have such an immortality as the works of nature, and are modern at the same time that they are ancient, like the sun and stars, and occupy by right no small share of the present. This palpable beauty is the treasured wealth of the world and the proper inheritance of each generation. Books, the oldest and the best, stand rightfully on the shelves of every cottage. They have not to plead their cause, but they enlighten their readers and it is gained. When the illiterate and scornful rustic earns his imagined leisure and wealth, he turns inevitably at last — he or his children — to these still higher and yet inaccessible circles; and even when his descendant has attained to move in the highest rank of the wise men of his own age and country, he will still be sensible only of the imperfection of his culture and the vanity and inefficiency of his intellectual wealth, if his genius will not permit him to listen with somewhat of the equanimity of an equal to the fames of godlike men, which yet, as it were, form an invisible upper class in every society.[1]

I have carried an apple in my pocket to-night — a sopsivine, they call it — till, now that I take my hand-

[1] [*Walden*, p. 114; Riv. 162.]

kerchief out, it has got so fine a fragrance that it really seems like a friendly trick of some pleasant dæmon to entertain me with.[1] It is redolent of sweet-scented orchards, of innocent, teeming harvests. I realize the existence of a goddess Pomona, and that the gods have really intended that men should feed divinely, like themselves, on their own nectar and ambrosia. They have so painted this fruit, and freighted it with such a fragrance, that it satisfies much more than an animal appetite. Grapes, peaches, berries, nuts, etc., are likewise provided for those who will sit at their sideboard. I have felt, when partaking of this inspiring diet, that my appetite was an indifferent consideration; that eating became a sacrament, a method of communion, an ecstatic exercise, a mingling of bloods, and [a] sitting at the communion table of the world; and so have not only quenched my thirst at the spring but the health of the universe.

The indecent haste and grossness with which our food is swallowed have cast a disgrace on the very act of eating itself. But I do believe that, if this process were rightly conducted, its aspect and effects would be wholly changed, and we should receive our daily life and health, Antæus-like, with an ecstatic delight, and, with upright front, an innocent and graceful behavior, take our strength from day to day. This fragrance of the apple in my pocket has, I confess, deterred me from eating of it. I am more effectually fed by it another way.

It is, indeed, the common notion that this fragrance

[1] [See *Excursions*, p. 295 ; Riv. 362.]

is the only food of the gods, and inasmuch as we are partially divine we are compelled to respect it.

Tell me, ye wise ones, if ye can,
Whither and whence the race of man.
For I have seen his slender clan
Clinging to hoar hills with their feet,
Threading the forest for their meat.
Moss and lichens, bark and grain
They rake together with might and main,
And they digest them with anxiety and pain.
I meet them in their rags and unwashed hair,
Instructed to eke out their scanty fare —
Brave race — with a yet humbler prayer.
Beggars they are, aye, on the largest scale.
They beg their daily bread at heaven's door,
And if their this year's crop alone should fail,
They neither bread nor begging would know more.
They are the titmen of their race,
And hug the vales with mincing pace
Like Troglodytes, and fight with cranes.
We walk 'mid great relations' feet.
What they let fall alone we eat.
We are only able
To catch the fragments from their table.
These elder brothers of our race,
By us unseen, with larger pace
Walk o'er our heads, and live our lives,
Embody our desires and dreams,
Anticipate our hoped-for gleams.
We grub the earth for our food.

We know not what is good.
Where does the fragrance of our orchards go,
Our vineyards, while we toil below?
A finer race and finer fed
Feast and revel above our head.
The tints and fragrance of the flowers and fruits
Are but the crumbs from off their table,
While we consume the pulp and roots.
Sometimes we do assert our kin,
And stand a moment where once they have been.
We hear their sounds and see their sights,
And we experience their delights.
But for the moment that we stand
Astonished on the Olympian land,
We do discern no traveller's face,
No elder brother of our race,
To lead us to the monarch's court
And represent our case;
But straightway we must journey back,
Retracing slow the arduous track,
Without the privilege to tell,
Even, the sight we know so well.[1]

In my father's house are many mansions.

Who ever explored the mansions of the air? Who knows who his neighbors are? We seem to lead our human lives amid a concentric system of worlds, of realm on realm, close bordering on each other, where dwell the unknown and the imagined races, as various in degree as our own thoughts are, — a system of in-

[1] [Eight lines, somewhat altered, *Week*, pp. 407, 408; Riv. 503.]

visible partitions more infinite in number and more inconceivable in intricacy than the starry one which science has penetrated.

When I play my flute to-night, earnest as if to leap the bounds [of] the narrow fold where human life is penned, and range the surrounding plain, I hear echo from a neighboring wood, a stolen pleasure, occasionally not rightfully heard, much more for other ears than ours, for 't is the reverse of sound. It is not our own melody that comes back to us, but an amended strain. And I would only hear myself as I would hear my echo, corrected and repronounced for me. It is as when my friend reads my verse.

The borders of our plot are set with flowers, whose seeds were blown from more Elysian fields adjacent. They are the pot-herbs of the gods, which our laborious feet have never reached, and fairer fruits and unaccustomed fragrance betray another realm's vicinity. There, too, is Echo found, with which we play at evening. There is the abutment of the rainbow's arch.[1]

Aug. 6. Walden. — I have just been reading a book called "The Crescent and the Cross,"[2] till now I am somewhat ashamed of myself. Am I sick, or idle, that I can sacrifice my energy, America, and to-day to this man's ill-remembered and indolent story? Carnac and Luxor are but names, and still more desert sand and at length a wave of the great ocean itself are needed to wash away the filth that attaches to their grandeur.

[1] [*Week*, p. 407; Riv. 503.]

[2] [By Eliot Warburton, London, 1844, and New York, 1845.]

Carnac! Carnac! this is Carnac for me, and I behold the columns of a larger and a purer temple.[1] May our childish and fickle aspirations be divine, while we descend to this mean intercourse. Our reading should be heroic, in an unknown tongue, a dialect always but imperfectly learned, through which we stammer line by line, catching but a glimmering of the sense, and still afterward admiring its unexhausted hieroglyphics, its untranslated columns. Here grow around me nameless trees and shrubs, each morning freshly sculptured, rising new stories day by day, instead of hideous ruins, —their myriad-handed worker uncompelled as uncompelling. This is my Carnac; that its unmeasured dome. The measuring art man has invented flourishes and dies upon this temple's floor, nor ever dreams to reach that ceiling's height. Carnac and Luxor crumble underneath. Their shadowy roofs let in the light once more reflected from the ceiling of the sky.

Behold these flowers! Let us be up with Time, not dreaming of three thousand years ago. Erect ourselves and let those columns lie, not stoop to raise a foil against the sky. Where is the *spirit* of that time but in this present day, this present line? Three thousand years ago are not agone; they are still lingering here this summer morn.

And Memnon's mother sprightly greets us now;
Wears still her youthful blushes on her brow.
And Carnac's columns, why stand they on the plain?
T' enjoy our opportunities they would fain remain.

[1] [*Week*, pp. 266, 267; Riv. 331.]

This is my Carnac, whose unmeasured dome
Shelters the measuring art and measurer's home,
Whose propylæum is the system high [?]
And sculptured façade the visible sky.

Where there is memory which compelleth Time, the Muses' mother, and the Muses nine, there are all ages, past and future time, — unwearied memory that does not forget the actions of the past, that does not forego to stamp them freshly, that Old Mortality, industrious to retouch the monuments of time, in the world's cemetery throughout every clime.[1]

The student may read Homer or Æschylus in the original Greek; for to do so implies to emulate their heroes, — the consecration of morning hours to their pages.

The heroic books, though printed in the character of our mother tongue, are always written in a foreign language, dead to idle and degenerate times, and we must laboriously seek the meaning of each word and line, conjecturing a larger sense than the text renders us, at last, out of our own valor and generosity.[2]

A man must find his own occasion in himself. The natural day is very calm, and will hardly reprove our indolence. If there is no elevation in our spirits, the pond will not seem elevated like a mountain tarn, but a low pool, a silent muddy water, a place for fishermen.

I sit here at my window like a priest of Isis, and ob-

[1] [*Week*, pp. 266, 267; Riv. 330–332.]
[2] [*Walden*, p. 111; Riv. 157, 158.]

serve the phenomena of three thousand years ago, yet unimpaired. The tantivy of wild pigeons, an ancient race of birds, gives a voice to the air, flying by twos and threes athwart my view or perching restless on the white pine boughs occasionally; a fish hawk dimples the glassy surface of the pond and brings up a fish; and for the last half-hour I have heard the rattle of railroad cars conveying travellers from Boston to the country.[1]

After the evening train has gone by and left the world to silence and to me, the whip-poor-will chants her vespers for half an hour. And when all is still at night, the owls take up the strain, like mourning women their ancient ululu. Their most dismal scream is truly Ben-Jonsonian. Wise midnight hags! It is no honest and blunt tu-whit tu-who of the poets, but, without jesting, a most solemn graveyard ditty, — but the mutual consolations of suicide lovers remembering the pangs and the delights of supernal love in the infernal groves. And yet I love to hear their wailing, their doleful responses, trilled along the woodside, reminding me sometimes of music and singing birds, as if it were the dark and tearful side of music, the regrets and sighs, that would fain be sung. The spirits, the *low* spirits and melancholy forebodings, of fallen spirits who once in human shape night-walked the earth and did the deeds of darkness, now expiating with their wailing hymns, threnodiai, their sins in the very scenery of their transgressions. They give me a new sense of the vastness and mystery of that nature which is the common dwelling of us both.

[1] [*Walden*, p. 127; Riv. 179, 180.]

"Oh-o-o-o-o that I never had been bor-or-or-or-orn!" sighs one on this side of the pond, and circles in the restlessness of despair to some new perch in the gray oaks. Then, "That I never had been bor-or-or-or-orn!" echoes one on the further side, with a tremulous sincerity, and "Bor-or-or-or-orn" comes faintly from far in the Lincoln woods.[1]

And then the frogs, bullfrogs; they are the more sturdy spirits of ancient wine-bibbers and wassailers, still unrepentant, trying to sing a catch in their Stygian lakes. They would fain keep up the hilarious good fellowship and all the rules of their old round tables, but they have waxed hoarse and solemnly grave and serious their voices, mocking at mirth, and their wine has lost its flavor and is only liquor to distend their paunches, and never comes sweet intoxication to drown the memory of the past, but mere saturation and water-logged dullness and distension. Still the most aldermanic, with his chin upon a pad, which answers for a napkin to his drooling chaps, under the eastern shore quaffs a deep draught of the once scorned water, and passes round the cup with the ejaculation *tr-r-r-r-r-oonk*, *tr-r-r-r-r-oonk*, *tr-r-r-r-oonk!* and straightway comes over the water from some distant cove the selfsame password, where the next in seniority and girth has gulped down to his mark; and when the strain has made the circuit of the shores, then ejaculates the master of ceremonies with satisfaction *tr-r-r-r-oonk!* and each in turn repeats the sound, down to the least distended, leakiest, flabbiest

[1] [*Walden*, pp. 137, 138; Riv. 194–196.]

paunched, that there be no mistake; and the bowl goes round again, until the sun dispels the morning mist, and only the patriarch is not under the pond, but vainly bellowing *troonk* from time to time, pausing for a reply.[1]

All nature is classic and akin to art. The sumach and pine and hickory which surround my house remind me of the most graceful sculpture. Sometimes their tops, or a single limb or leaf, seems to have grown to a distinct expression as if it were a symbol for me to interpret. Poetry, painting, and sculpture claim at once and associate with themselves those perfect specimens of the art of nature, — leaves, vines, acorns, pine cones, etc. The critic must at last stand as mute though contented before a true poem as before an acorn or a vine leaf. The perfect work of art is received again into the bosom of nature whence its material proceeded, and that criticism which can only detect its unnaturalness has no longer any office to fulfill. The choicest maxims that have come down to us are more beautiful or integrally wise than they are wise to our understandings. This wisdom which we are inclined to pluck from their stalk is the point only of a single association. Every natural form — palm leaves and acorns, oak leaves and sumach and dodder — are [*sic*] untranslatable aphorisms.

Twenty-three years since, when I was five years old, I was brought from Boston to this pond, away in the country, — which was then but another name for the extended world for me, — one of the most ancient scenes

[1] [*Walden*, pp. 139, 140; Riv. 197, 198.]

stamped on the tablets of my memory, the oriental Asiatic valley of my world, whence so many races and inventions have gone forth in recent times. That woodland vision for a long time made the drapery of my dreams. That sweet solitude my spirit seemed so early to require that I might have room to entertain my thronging guests, and that speaking silence that my ears might distinguish the significant sounds. Somehow or other it at once gave the preference to this recess among the pines, where almost sunshine and shadow were the only inhabitants that varied the scene, over that tumultuous and varied city, as if it had found its proper nursery.

Well, now, to-night my flute awakes the echoes over this very water, but one generation of pines has fallen, and with their stumps I have cooked my supper, and a lusty growth of oaks and pines is rising all around its brim and preparing its wilder aspect for new infant eyes. Almost the same johnswort springs from the same perennial root in this pasture. Even I have at length helped to clothe that fabulous landscape of my imagination, and one result of my presence and influence is seen in these bean leaves and corn blades and potato vines.[1]

As difficult to preserve is the tenderness of your nature as the bloom upon a peach.

Most men are so taken up with the cares and rude practice of life that its finer fruits cannot be plucked by them. Literally, the laboring man has not leisure for

[1] [*Walden*, p. 242, where he makes his age four instead of five at the time of this early visit.]

a strict and lofty integrity day by day; he cannot afford to sustain the fairest and noblest relations. His labor will depreciate in the market.

How can he remember well his ignorance who has so often to use his knowledge.

Aug. 15. The sounds heard at this hour, 8.30, are the distant rumbling of wagons over bridges, — a sound farthest heard of any human at night, — the baying of dogs, the lowing of cattle in distant yards.[1]

What if we were to obey these fine dictates, these divine suggestions, which are addressed to the mind and not to the body, which are certainly true, — not to eat meat, not to buy, or sell, or barter, etc., etc., etc.?

I will not plant beans another summer, but sincerity, truth, simplicity, faith, trust, innocence, and see if they will not grow in this soil with such manure as I have, and sustain me.[2] When a man meets a man, it should not be some uncertain appearance and falsehood, but the personification of great qualities. Here comes truth, perchance, personified, along the road.[3] Let me see how Truth behaves. I have not seen enough of her. He shall utter no foreign word, no doubtful sentence, and I shall not make haste to part with him.

I would not forget that I deal with infinite and divine qualities in my fellow. All men, indeed, are divine in their core of light, but that is indistinct and distant to me, like the stars of the least magnitude, or the galaxy

[1] [*Walden*, p. 139; Riv. 197.] [2] [*Walden*, p. 181; Riv. 255.]
[3] [*Walden*, p. 182; Riv. 256.]

itself, but my kindred planets show their round disks and even their attendant moons to my eye.

Even the tired laborers I meet on the road, I really meet as travelling gods, but it is as yet, and must be for a long season, without speech.

Aug. 23. *Saturday.* I set out this afternoon to go a-fishing for pickerel to eke out my scanty fare of vegetables. From Walden I went through the woods to Fair Haven, but by the way the rain came on again, and my fates compelled me to stand a half-hour under a pine, piling boughs over my head, and wearing my pocket handkerchief for an umbrella; and when at length I had made one cast over the pickerel-weed, the thunder gan romblen in the heven with that grisly steven that Chaucer tells of.[1] (The gods must be proud, with such forked flashes and such artillery to rout a poor unarmed fisherman.) I made haste to the nearest hut for a shelter. This stood a half a mile off the road, and so much the nearer to the pond. There dwelt a shiftless Irishman, John Field, and his wife, and many children, from the broad-faced boy that ran by his father's side to escape the rain to the wrinkled and sibyl-like, crone-like infant, not knowing whether to take the part of age or infancy, that sat upon its father's knee as in the palaces of nobles, and looked out from its home in the midst of wet and hunger inquisitively upon the stranger, with the privilege of infancy; the young creature not knowing but it might be the last of a line of kings instead of John Field's poor starveling brat, or, I should rather say, still

[1] [*The Legend of Good Women*, ll. 1218, 1219.]

knowing that it was the last of a noble line and the hope and cynosure of the world. An honest, hard-working, but shiftless man plainly was John Field; and his wife, she too was brave to cook so many succeeding dinners in the recesses of that lofty stove; with round, greasy face and bare breast, still thinking to improve her condition one day; with the never absent mop in hand, and yet no effects of it visible anywhere. The chickens, like members of the family, stalked about the room, too much humanized to roast well. They stood and looked in my eye or pecked at my shoe. He told me his story, how hard he worked bogging for a neighbor, at ten dollars an acre and the use of the land with manure for one year, and the little broad-faced son worked cheerfully at his father's side the while, not knowing, alas! how poor a bargain he had made. Living, John Field, alas! without arithmetic; failing to live.

"Do you ever fish?" said I. "Oh yes, I catch a mess when I am lying by; good perch I catch." "What's your bait?" "I catch shiners with fishworms, and bait the perch with them." "You'd better go now, John," said his wife, with glistening, hopeful face. But poor John Field disturbed but a couple of fins, while I was catching a fair string, and he said it was his luck; and when he changed seats luck changed seats too. Thinking to live by some derivative old-country mode in this primitive new country, *e. g.* to catch perch with shiners.[1]

I find an instinct in me conducting to a mystic spiritual life, and also another to a primitive savage life.

[1] [*Walden*, pp. 225–227, 229, 231; Riv. 317–320, 322, 325, 326.]

Toward evening, as the world waxes darker, I am permitted to see the woodchuck stealing across my path, and tempted to seize and devour it. The wildest, most desolate scenes are strangely familiar to me.[1]

Why not live a hard and emphatic life, not to be avoided, full of adventures and work, learn much in it, travel much, though it be only in these woods? I sometimes walk across a field with unexpected expansion and long-missed content, as if there were a field worthy of me. The usual daily boundaries of life are dispersed, and I see in what field I stand.

When on my way this afternoon, Shall I go down this long hill in the rain to fish in the pond? I ask myself. And I say to myself: Yes, roam far, grasp life and conquer it, learn much and live. Your fetters are knocked off; you are really free. Stay till late in the night; be unwise and daring. See many men far and near, in their fields and cottages before the sun sets, though as if many more were to be seen. And yet each *rencontre* shall be so satisfactory and simple that no other shall seem possible. Do not repose every night as villagers do. The noble life is continuous and unintermitting. At least, live with a longer radius. Men come home at night only from the next field or street, where their household echoes haunt, and their life pines and is sickly because it breathes its own breath. Their shadows morning and evening reach farther than their daily steps. But come home from far, from ventures and perils, from enterprise and discovery and crusading, with faith

[1] [*Walden*, p. 232; Riv. 327.]

and experience and character.[1] Do not rest much. Dismiss prudence, fear, conformity. Remember only what is promised. Make the day light you, and the night hold a candle, though you be falling from heaven to earth "from morn to dewy eve a summer's day."

For Vulcan's fall occupied a day, but our highest aspirations and performances fill but the interstices of time.

Are we not reminded in our better moments that we have been needlessly husbanding somewhat, perchance our little God-derived capital, or title to capital, guarding it by methods we know? But the most diffuse prodigality a better wisdom teaches, — that we *hold* nothing. We are not what we were. By usurers' craft, by Jewish methods, we strive to retain and increase the divinity in us, when infinitely the greater part of divinity is out of us.

Most men have forgotten that it was ever morning; but a few serene memories, healthy and wakeful natures, there are who assure us that the sun rose clear, heralded by the singing of birds, — this very day's sun, which rose before Memnon was ready to greet it.

In all the dissertations on language, men forget the language that is, that is really universal, the inexpressible meaning that is in all things and everywhere, with which the morning and evening teem. As if language were especially of the tongue of course. With a more

[1] [*Walden*, pp. 230, 231; Riv. 323–325.]

copious learning or understanding of what is published, the present *languages*, and all that they express, will be forgotten.

The rays which streamed through the crevices will be no more remembered when the shadow is wholly removed.

Left house on account of plastering, Wednesday, November 12th, at night; returned Saturday, December 6th.[1]

Though the race is not so degenerated but a man might possibly live in a cave to-day and keep himself warm by furs, yet, as caves and wild beasts are not plenty enough to accommodate all at the present day, it were certainly better to accept the advantages which the invention and industry of mankind offer. In thickly settled civilized communities, boards and shingles, lime and brick, are cheaper and more easily come by than suitable caves, or the whole logs, or bark in sufficient quantity, or even well-tempered clay or flat stones.[2] A tolerable house for a rude and hardy race that lived much out of doors was once made here without any of these last materials. According to the testimony of the first settlers of Boston, an Indian wigwam was as comfortable in winter as an English house with all its wainscotting, and they had advanced so far as to regulate the effect of the wind by a mat suspended over the hole

[1] [See *Walden*, pp. 271, 272; Riv. 380, 381.]

[2] [*Walden*, p. 44; Riv. 65, 66.]

in the roof, which was moved by a string. Such a lodge was, in the first instance, constructed in a day or two and taken down and put up again in a few hours, and every family had one.[1]

Thus, to try our civilization by a fair test, in the ruder states of society every family owns a shelter as good as the best, and sufficient for its ruder and simpler wants; but in modern civilized society, though the birds of the air have their nests, and woodchucks and foxes their holes, though each one is commonly the owner of his coat and hat though never so poor, yet not more than one man in a thousand owns a shelter, but the nine hundred and ninety-nine pay an annual tax for this outside garment of all, indispensable summer and winter, which would buy a village of Indian wigwams and contributes to keep them poor as long as they live. But, answers one, by simply paying this annual tax the poorest man secures an abode which is a palace compared to the Indian's. An annual rent of from twenty to sixty or seventy dollars entitles him to the benefit of all the improvements of centuries, — Rumford fireplace, back plastering, Venetian blinds, copper pump, spring lock, etc., etc.[2] But while civilization has been improving our houses, she has not equally improved the men who should occupy them. She has created palaces, but it was not so easy to create noblemen and kings. The mason who finishes the cornice of the palace returns at night, perchance, to a hut no better than a

[1] [*Walden*, pp. 32, 33; Riv. 48, 49.]
[2] [*Walden*, pp. 33, 34; Riv. 50, 51.]

wigwam.[1] If she claims to have made a real advance in the welfare of man, she must show how she has produced better dwellings without making them more costly. And the cost of a thing, it will be remembered, is the amount of life it requires to be exchanged for it, immediately or in the long run. An average house costs perhaps from one thousand to fifteen hundred dollars, and to earn this sum will require from fifteen to twenty years of the day laborer's life, even if he is not incumbered with a family; so that he must spend more than half his life before a wigwam can be earned; and if we suppose he pays a rent instead, this is but a doubtful choice of evils. Would the savage have been wise to exchange his wigwam for a palace on these terms?[2]

When I consider my neighbors, the farmers of Concord, for instance, who are at least as well off as the other classes, what are they about? For the most part I find that they have been toiling ten, twenty, or thirty years to pay for their farms, and we may set down one half of that toil to the cost of their houses; and commonly they have not yet paid for them.[3] This is the reason they are poor; and for similar reasons we are all poor in respect to a thousand savage comforts, though surrounded by luxuries.[4]

But most men do not know what a house is, and the mass are actually poor all their days because they think they must have such an one as their neighbor's. As if one were to wear any sort of coat the tailor might cut

[1] [*Walden*, pp. 37, 38; Riv. 56.]
[2] [*Walden*, p. 34; Riv. 51, 52.]
[3] [*Walden*, p. 35; Riv. 53.]
[4] [*Walden*, p. 36; Riv. 55.]

out for him, or, gradually leaving off palm-leaf hat and cap of woodchuck-skin, should complain of hard times because he could not buy him a crown![1]

It reflects no little dignity on Nature, the fact that the Romans once inhabited her, — that from this same unaltered hill, forsooth, the Roman once looked out upon the sea, as from a signal station. The vestiges of military roads, of houses and tessellated courts and baths, — Nature need not be ashamed of these relics of her children. The hero's cairn, — one doubts at length whether his relations or Nature herself raised the hill. The whole earth is but a hero's cairn. How often are the Romans flattered by the historian and antiquary! Their vessels penetrated into this frith and up that river of some remote isle. Their military monuments still remain on the hills and under the sod of the valleys. The oft-repeated Roman story is written in still legible characters in every quarter of the old world, and but to-day a new coin is dug up whose inscription repeats and confirms their fame. Some "Judæa Capta," with a woman mourning under a palm tree, with silent argument and demonstration puts at rest whole pages of history.[2]

The Earth
Which seems so barren once gave birth
To heroes, who o'erran her plains,
Who plowed her seas and reaped her grains.

Some make the mythology of the Greeks to have

[1] [*Walden*, p. 39; Riv. 58.] [2] [*Week*, p. 264; Riv. 328.]

been borrowed from that of the Hebrews, which however is not to be proved by analogies, — the story of Jupiter dethroning his father Saturn, for instance, from the conduct of Cham towards his father Noah, and the division of the world among the three brothers. But the Hebrew fable will not bear to be compared with the Grecian. The latter is infinitely more sublime and divine. The one is a history of mortals, the other a history of gods and heroes, therefore not so ancient. The one god of the Hebrews is not so much of a gentleman, not so gracious and divine, not so flexible and catholic, does not exert so intimate an influence on nature as many a one of the Greeks. He is not less human, though more absolute and unapproachable. The Grecian were youthful and living gods, but still of godlike or divine race, and had the virtues of gods. The Hebrew had not all of the divinity that is in man, no real love for man, but an inflexible justice. The attribute of the one god has been infinite power, not grace, not humanity, nor love even, — wholly masculine, with no sister Juno, no Apollo, no Venus in him. I might say that the one god was not yet apotheosized, not yet become the current material of poetry.[1]

The wisdom of some of those Greek fables is remarkable. The god Apollo (Wisdom, Wit, Poetry) condemned to serve, keep the sheep of *King* Admetus. So is poetry allied to the state.

To Æacus, Minos, Rhadamanthus, judges in hell,

[1] [*Week*, p. 65; Riv. 81.]

only naked men came to be judged. As Alexander Ross comments, "In this world we must not look for Justice; when we are stript of all, then shall we have it. For here something will be found about us that shall corrupt the Judge." When the island of Ægina was depopulated by sickness at the instance of Æacus, Jupiter turned the ants into men, *i. e.* made men of the inhabitants who lived meanly like ants.[1]

The hidden significance of these fables which has been detected, the ethics running parallel to the poetry and history, is not so remarkable as the readiness with which they may be made to express any truth. They are the skeletons of still older and more universal truths than any whose flesh and blood they are for the time made to wear. It is like striving to make the sun and the wind and the sea signify. What signifies it? [2]

Piety, that carries its father on its shoulders.[3]

Music was of three kinds, — mournful, martial, and effeminate, — Lydian, Doric, and Phrygian. Its inventors Amphion, Thamyris, and Marsyas. Amphion was bred by shepherds. He caused the stones to follow him and built the walls of Thebes by his music. All orderly and harmonious or beautiful structures may be said to be raised to a slow music.

Harmony was begotten of Mars and Venus.

[1] [*Week*, p. 58; Riv. 72.] [2] [*Week*, p. 61; Riv. 76.]
[3] [*Week*, p. 136; Riv. 169.]

Antæus was the son of Neptune and the Earth. All physical bulk and strength is of the earth and mortal. When it loses this *point d'appui* it is weakness; it cannot soar. And so, *vice versa*, you can interpret this fable to the credit of the earth.

They all provoked or challenged the gods, — Amphion, Apollo and Diana, and was killed by them; Thamyris, the Muses, who conquered him in music, took away his eyesight and melodious voice, and broke his lyre. Marsyas took up the flute which Minerva threw away, challenged Apollo, was flayed alive by him, and his death mourned by Fauns, Satyrs, and Dryads, whose tears produced the river which bears his name.

The fable which is truly and naturally composed, so as to please the imagination of a child, harmonious though strange like a wild-flower, is to the wise man an apothegm and admits his wisest interpretation.

When we read that Bacchus made the Tyrrhenian mariners mad, so that they leaped into the sea, mistaking it for "a meadow full of flowers," and so became dolphins, we are not concerned about the historical truth of this, but rather a higher, poetical truth. We seem to hear the music of a thought, and care not if our intellect be not gratified.[1]

The mythologies, those vestiges of ancient poems, the world's inheritance, still reflecting some of their original hues, like the fragments of clouds tinted by the

[1] [*Week*, p. 58; Riv. 72, 73.]

departed sun, the wreck of poems, a retrospect as [of] the loftiest fames, — what survives of oldest fame, — some fragment will still float into the latest summer day and ally this hour to the morning of creation. These are the materials and hints for a history of the rise and progress of the race. How from the condition of ants it arrived at the condition of men, how arts were invented gradually, — let a thousand surmises shed some light on this story. We will not be confined by historical, even geological, periods, which would allow us to doubt of a progress in human events. If we rise above this wisdom for the day, we shall expect that this morning of the race, in which they have been supplied with the simplest necessaries, — with corn and wine and honey and oil and fire and articulate speech and agricultural and other arts, — reared up by degrees from the condition of ants to men, will be succeeded by a day of equally progressive splendor; that, in the lapse of the divine periods, other divine agents and godlike men will assist to elevate the race as much above its present condition.

Aristæus "found out honey and oil." "He obtained of Jupiter and Neptune, that the pestilential heat of the dog-days, wherein was great mortality, should be mitigated with wind."[1]

Dec. 12. *Friday.* The pond skimmed over on the night of this day, excepting a strip from the bar to the northwest shore. Flint's Pond has been frozen for some time.[2]

[1] [*Week*, p. 57; Riv. 72.] [2] [*Walden*, p. 275; Riv. 386.]

Dec. 16, 17, 18, 19, 20. Pond *quite free* from ice, not yet having been frozen quite over.

Dec. 23. *Tuesday.* The pond froze over last night entirely for the first time, yet so as not to be safe to walk upon.[1]

I wish to say something to-night not of and concerning the Chinese and Sandwich-Islanders, but *to* and concerning you who hear me, who are said to live in New England; something about your condition, especially your outward condition or circumstances in this world, in this town; what it is, whether it is necessarily as bad as it is, whether it can't be improved as well as not.[2]

It is generally admitted that some of you are poor, find it hard to get a living, have n't always something in your pockets, have n't paid for all the dinners you 've actually eaten, or all your coats and shoes, some of which are already worn out. All this is very well known to all by hearsay and by experience. It is very evident what a mean and sneaking life you live, always in the hampers, always on the limits, trying to get into business and trying to get out of debt, a very ancient slough, called by the Latins *aes alienum*, another's brass,— some of their coins being made of brass, — and still so many living and dying and buried to-day by another's brass; always promising to pay, promising to pay, with interest, to-morrow perhaps, and die to-day, insolvent; seeking to curry favor, to get custom, lying, flattering,

[1] [*Walden*, p. 275 ; Riv. 386.] [2] [*Walden*, p. 4 ; Riv. 9.]

voting, contracting yourselves into a nutshell of civility or dilating into a world of thin and vaporous generosity, that you may persuade your neighbor to let you make his [shoes, or his hat, or his coat, or his carriage, etc.].[1]

There is a civilization going on among brutes as well as men. Foxes are forest dogs. I hear one barking raggedly, wildly, demoniacally in the darkness to-night, seeking expression, laboring with some anxiety, striving to be a dog outright that he may carelessly run in the street, struggling for light. He is but a faint man, before pygmies; an imperfect, burrowing man. He has come up near to my window, attracted by the light, and barked a vulpine curse at me, then retreated.[2]

Reading suggested by Hallam's History of Literature.

1. "Abelard and Heloise."

2. Look at Luigi Pulci. His "Morgante Maggiore," published in 1481, "was to the poetical romances of chivalry what Don Quixote was to their brethren in prose."

3. Leonardo da Vinci. The most remarkable of his writings still in manuscript. For his universality of genius, "the first name of the fifteenth century."

4. Read Boiardo's "Orlando Innamorato," published between 1491 and 1500, for its influence on Ariosto and its intrinsic merits. Its sounding names repeated by Milton in "Paradise Regained."

[1] [*Walden*, p. 7; Riv. 12, 13.] [2] [*Walden*, p. 301; Riv. 422.]

Landor's works are: —

A small volume of poems, 1793, out of print.

Poems of "Gebir," "Chrysaor," the "Phoceans," etc. The "Gebir" eulogized by Southey and Coleridge.

Wrote verses in Italian and Latin.

The dramas "Andrea of Hungary," "Giovanna of Naples," and "Fra Rupert."

"Pericles and Aspasia."

"Poems from the Arabic and Persian," 1800, pretending to be translations.

"A Satire upon Satirists, and Admonition to Detractors," printed 1836, not published.

Letters called "High and Low Life in Italy."

"Imaginary Conversations."

"Pentameron and Pentalogia."

"Examination of William Shakspeare before Sir Thomas Lucy, Knt., touching Deer-stealing."

Vide again Richard's sail in "Richard First and the Abbot." [1]

Phocion's remarks in conclusion of "Eschines and Phocion."

"Demosthenes and Eubulides."

In Milton and Marvel, speaking of the Greek poets, he says, "There is a sort of refreshing odor flying off it perpetually; not enough to oppress or to satiate; nothing is beaten or bruised; nothing smells of the stalk; the flower itself is half-concealed by the Genius of it hovering round."

Pericles and Sophocles.

[1] [See *Journal*, vol. vii, Feb. 1, 1855.]

Marcus Tullius Cicero and his brother Quintus. In this a sentence on Sleep and Death.

Johnson and Tooke, for a criticism on words.

It is worth the while to have lived a primitive wilderness life at some time, to know what are, after all, the necessaries of life and what methods society has taken to supply them. I have looked over the old day-books of the merchants with the same view, — to see what it was shopmen bought. They are the grossest groceries.[1] Salt is perhaps the most important article in such a list, and most commonly bought at the stores, of articles commonly thought to be necessaries, — salt, sugar, molasses, cloth, etc., — by the farmer. You will see why stores or shops exist, not to furnish tea and coffee, but salt, etc. Here 's the rub, then.

I see how I could supply myself with every other article which I need, without using the shops, and to obtain this might be the fit occasion for a visit to the seashore. Yet even salt cannot strictly speaking be called a necessary of human life, since many tribes do not use it.

"Have you seen my hound, sir? I want to know! — what! a lawyer's office? law books? — if you 've seen anything of a hound about here. Why, what do you do here?" "I live here. No, I have n't." "Have n't you heard one in the woods anywhere?" "Oh, yes, I heard one this evening." "What do you do here?" "But he was some way off." "Which side did he seem to be?"

[1] [*Walden*, pp. 12, 13; Riv. 21.]

"Well, I should think he [was] the other side of the pond." "This is a large dog; makes a large track. He 's been out hunting from Lexington for a week. How long have you lived here?" "Oh, about a year." "Somebody said there was a man up here had a camp in the woods somewhere, and he 'd got him." "Well, I don't know of anybody. There 's Britton's camp over on the other road. It may be there." "Is n't there anybody in these woods?" "Yes, they are chopping right up here behind me." "How far is it?" "Only a few steps. Hark a moment. There, don't you hear the sound of their axes?" [1]

Therien, the woodchopper, was here yesterday, and while I was cutting wood, some chickadees hopped near pecking the bark and chips and the potato-skins I had thrown out. "What do you call them," he asked. I told him.

"What do *you* call them," asked I. "*Mezezence* [?]," I think he said. "When I eat my dinner in the woods," said he, "sitting very still, having kindled a fire to warm my coffee, they come and light on my arm and peck at the potato in my fingers. I like to have the little fellers about me." [2] Just then one flew up from the snow and perched on the wood I was holding in my arms, and pecked it, and looked me familiarly in the face. *Chicadee-dee-dee-dee-dee*, while others were whistling phebe, — *phe-bee*, — in the woods behind the house.[3]

[1] [*Walden*, p. 306; Riv. 429.] [2] [*Walden*, p. 162; Riv. 228.]
[3] [*Walden*, p. 304; Riv. 426.]

March 26, 1846. The change from foul weather to fair, from dark, sluggish hours to serene, elastic ones, is a memorable crisis which all things proclaim. The change from foulness to serenity is instantaneous. Suddenly an influx of light, though it was late, filled my room. I looked out and saw that the pond was already calm and full of hope as on a summer evening, though the ice was dissolved but yesterday. There seemed to be some intelligence in the pond which responded to the unseen serenity in a distant horizon. I heard a robin in the distance, — the first I had heard this spring, — repeating the assurance. The green pitch [pine] suddenly looked brighter and more erect, as if now entirely washed and cleansed by the rain. I knew it would not rain any more. A serene summer-evening sky seemed darkly reflected in the pond, though the clear sky was nowhere visible overhead. It was no longer the end of a season, but the beginning. The pines and shrub oaks, which had before drooped and cowered the winter through with myself, now recovered their several characters and in the landscape revived the expression of an immortal beauty. Trees seemed all at once to be fitly grouped, to sustain new relations to men and to one another. There was somewhat cosmical in the arrangement of nature. O the evening robin, at the close of a New England day! If I could ever find the twig he sits upon! Where does the minstrel really roost? We perceive it is not the bird of the ornithologist that is heard, — the *Turdus migratorius.*

The signs of fair weather are seen in the bosom of ponds before they are recognized in the heavens. It

is easy to tell by looking at any twig of the forest whether its winter is past or not.[1]

We forget how the sun looks on our fields, as on the forests and the prairies, as they reflect or absorb his rays. It matters not whether we stand in Italy or on the prairies of the West, in the eye of the sun the earth is all equally cultivated like a garden, and yields to the wave of an irresistible civilization.

This broad field, which I have looked on so long, looks not to me as the farmer, looks away from me to the sun, and attends to the harmony of nature. These beans have results which are not harvested in the autumn of the year. They do not mind, if I harvest them, who waters and makes them grow? Our grain-fields make part of a beautiful picture which the sun beholds in his daily course, and it matters little comparatively whether they fill the barns of the husbandman. The true husbandman will cease from anxiety and labor with every day, and relinquish all claim to the produce of his fields.[2]

The avaricious man would fain plant by himself.

A flock of geese has just got in late, now in the dark flying low over the pond. They came on, indulging at last like weary travellers in complaint and consolation, or like some creaking evening mail late lumbering in with regular anserine clangor. I stood at my door and could hear their wings when they suddenly spied my light and, ceasing their noise, wheeled to the east and apparently settled in the pond.[3]

[1] [*Walden*, pp. 344, 345; Riv. 481, 482.]
[2] [*Walden*, pp. 183, 184; Riv. 258, 259.]
[3] [*Walden*, p. 345; Riv. 482.]

March 27. This morning I saw the geese from the door through the mist sailing about in the middle of the pond, but when I went to the shore they rose and circled round like ducks over my head, so that I counted them, — twenty-nine. I after saw thirteen ducks.[1]

[1] [*Walden*, p. 345; Riv. 482, 483.]

VIII

1845–1847

(ÆT. 27–30)

[THE small and much mutilated journal which begins here appears to belong to the Walden period (1845–47), but the entries are undated.]

THE HERO[1]

What doth he ask?
Some worthy task,
Never to run
Till that be done,
That never done
Under the sun.
Here to begin
All things to win
By his endeavor
Forever and ever.
Happy and well
On this ground to dwell,
This soil subdue,
Plant, and renew.
By might and main
Health and strength gain,
So to give nerve

[1] [Twenty-six lines of this, somewhat revised, appear under the title of "Pilgrims" in *Excursions, and Poems*, p. 413.]

To his slenderness;
Yet some mighty pain
He would sustain,
So to preserve
His tenderness.
Not be deceived,
Of suff'ring bereaved,
Not lose his life
By living too well,
Nor escape strife
In his lonely cell,
And so find out heaven
By not knowing hell.
Strength like the rock
To withstand any shock,
Yet some Aaron's rod,
Some smiting by God,
Occasion to gain
To shed human tears
And to entertain
Still demonic fears.
Not once for all, forever, blest,
Still to be cheered out of the west;
Not from his heart to banish all sighs;
Still be encouraged by the sunrise;
Forever to love and to love and to love,
Within him, around him, beneath him, above.
To love is to know, is to feel, is to be;
At once 't is his birth and his destiny.
Having sold all,
Something would get,

Furnish his stall
With better yet, —
For earthly pleasures
Celestial pains,
Heavenly losses
For earthly gains.
Still to begin — unheard-of sin
A fallen angel — a risen man
Never returns to where he began.
Some childlike labor
Here to perform,
Some baby-house
To keep out the storm,
And make the sun laugh
While he doth warm,
And the moon cry
To think of her youth,
The months gone by,
And wintering truth.

How long to morning?
Can any tell?
How long since the warning
On our ears fell?
The bridegroom cometh
Know we not well?
Are we not ready,
Our packet made,
Our hearts steady,
Last words said?
Must we still eat

The bread we have spurned?
Must we rekindle
The faggots we've burned?
Must we go out
By the poor man's gate?
Die by degrees,
Not by new fate?
Is there no road
This way, my friend?
Is there no road
Without any end?
Have you not seen
In ancient times
Pilgrims go by here
Toward other climes,
With shining faces
Youthful and strong
Mounting this hill
With speech and with song?
Oh, my good sir,
I know not the ways;
Little my knowledge,
Though many my days.
When I have slumbered,
I have heard sounds
As travellers passing
Over my grounds.
'T was a sweet music
Wafted them by;
I could not tell
If far off or nigh.

Unless I dreamed it,
This was of yore,
But I never told it
To mortal before;
Never remembered
But in my dreams
What to me waking
A miracle seems.
If you will give of your pulse or your grain,
We will rekindle those flames again.
Here will we tarry, still without doubt,
Till a miracle putteth that fire out.

At midnight's hour I raised my head.
The owls were seeking for their bread;
The foxes barked, impatient still
At their wan [?] fate they bear so ill.
I thought me of eternities delayed
And of commands but half obeyed.
The night wind rustled through the glade,
As if a force of men there staid;
The word was whispered through the ranks,
And every hero seized his lance.
The word was whispered through the ranks,
Advance!

To live to a good old age such as the ancients reached, serene and contented, dignifying the life of man, leading a simple, epic country life in these days of confusion and turmoil, — that is what Wordsworth has done.

Retaining the tastes and the innocence of his youth. There is more wonderful talent, but nothing so cheering and world-famous as this.

The life of man would seem to be going all to wrack and pieces, and no instance of permanence and the ancient natural health, notwithstanding Burns, and Coleridge, and Carlyle. It will not do for men to die young; the greatest genius does not die young. Whom the gods love most do indeed die young, but not till their life is matured, and their years are like those of the oak, for they are the products half of nature and half of God. What should nature do without old men, not children but men?

The life of men, not to become a mockery and a jest, should last a respectable term of years. We cannot spare the age of those old Greek Philosophers. They live long who do not live for a near end, who still forever look to the immeasurable future for their manhood.

All dramas have but one scene. There is but one stage for the peasant and for the actor, and both on the farm and in the theatre the curtain rises to reveal the same majestic scenery. The globe of earth is poised in space for his stage under the foundations of the theatre, and the cope of heaven, out of reach of the scene-shifter, overarches it. It is always to be remembered by the critic that all actions are to be regarded at last as performed from a distance upon some rood of earth and amid the operations of nature.

Rabelais, too, inhabited the soil of France in sunshine and shade in those years; and his life was no "farce" after all.

I seek the present time,
No other clime,
Life in to-day, —
Not to sail another way, —
To Paris or to Rome,
Or farther still from home.
That man, whoe'er he is,
Lives but a moral death
Whose life is not coeval
With his breath.
My feet forever stand
On Concord fields,
And I must live the life
Which their soil yields.
What are deeds done
Away from home?
What the best essay
On the Ruins of Rome?
The love of the new,
The unfathomed blue,
The wind in the wood,
All future good,
The sunlit tree,
The small chickadee,
The dusty highways,
What Scripture says,
This pleasant weather,
And all else together,
The river's meander,
All things, in short,
Forbid me to wander

In deed or in thought.
In cold or in drouth,
Not seek the sunny South,
But make my whole tour
In the sunny present hour.

For here if thou fail,
Where can'st thou prevail?
If you love not
Your own land most,
You 'll find nothing lovely
On a distant coast.
If you love not
The latest sunset,
What is there in pictures
Or old gems set?
If no man should travel
Till he had the means,
There 'd be little travelling
For kings or for queens.
The means, what are they?
They are the wherewithal
Great expenses to pay,
Life got, and some to spare,
Great works on hand,
And freedom from care,
Plenty of time well spent
To use,
Clothes paid for and no rent
In your shoes,
Something to eat

And something to burn,
And above all no need to return.
Then they who come back,
Say, have they not failed,
Wherever they've ridden,
Or steamed it, or sailed?

All your grass hay'd,
All your debts paid,
All your wills made;
Then you might as well have stay'd,
For are you not dead,
Only not buried?

The way unto "to-day,"
The railroad to "here,"
They never'll grade that way
Nor shorten it, I fear.
There are plenty of depots
All the world o'er,
But not a single station
At a man's door.
If he would get near
To the secret of things,
He'll not have to hear
When the engine bell rings.

Exaggeration! was ever any virtue attributed to a man without exaggeration? was ever any vice, without infinite exaggeration? Do we not exaggerate ourselves to ourselves, or do we often recognize ourselves for the

actual men we are? The lightning is an exaggeration of light. We live by exaggeration. Exaggerated history is poetry, and is truth referred to a new standard. To a small man every greater one is an exaggeration. No truth was ever expressed but with this sort of emphasis, so that for the time there was no other truth. The value of what is really valuable can never be exaggerated. You must speak loud to those who are hard of hearing; so you acquire a habit of speaking loud to those who are not. In order to appreciate any, even the humblest, man, you must not only understand, but you must first love him; and there never was such an exaggerator as love. Who are we? Are we not all of us great men? And yet what [are] we actually? Nothing, certainly, to speak of. By an immense exaggeration we appreciate our Greek poetry and philosophy, Egyptian ruins, our Shakespeares and Miltons, our liberty and Christianity. We give importance to this hour over all other hours. We do not live by justice, but [by grace.] [1]

Love never perjures itself, nor is it mistaken.

He is not the great writer, who is afraid to let the world know that he ever committed an impropriety. Does it not know that all men are mortal?

Carlyle told R. W. E. that he first discovered that he was not a jackass on reading "Tristram Shandy" and Rousseau's "Confessions," especially the last. His first essay is an article in *Fraser's Magazine* on two boys quarrelling.

[1] [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, pp. 352, 353; *Misc.*, Riv. 127, 128.]

Youth wants something to look up to, to look forward to; as the little boy who inquired of me the other day, "How long do those old-agers live?" and expressed the intention of compassing two hundred summers at least. The old man who cobbles shoes without glasses at a hundred, and cuts a handsome swath at a hundred and five, is indispensable to give dignity and respectability to our life.

From all points of the compass, from the earth beneath and the heavens above, have come these inspirations and been entered duly in the order of their arrival in the journal. Thereafter, when the time arrived, they were winnowed into lectures, and again, in due time, from lectures into essays. And at last they stand, like the cubes of Pythagoras, firmly on either basis; like statues on their pedestals, but the statues rarely take hold of hands. There is only such connection and series as is attainable in the galleries. And this affects their immediate practical and popular influence.

Carlyle, we should say, more conspicuously than any other, though with little enough expressed or even conscious sympathy, represents the Reformer class. In him the universal plaint is most settled and serious. Until the thousand named and nameless grievances are righted, there will be no repose for him in the lap of Nature or the seclusion of science and literature. And all the more for not being the visible acknowledged leader of any class.[1]

[1] [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, p. 344; *Misc.*, Riv. 116, 117.]

All places, all positions — all things in short — are a medium happy or unhappy. Every realm has its centre, and the nearer to that the better while you are in it. Even health is only the happiest of all mediums. There may be excess, or there may be deficiency; in either case there is disease. A man must only be *virtuous* enough.

I had one neighbor within half a mile for a short time when I first went to the woods, Hugh Quoil, an Irishman who had been a soldier at Waterloo, Colonel Quoil, as he was called, — I believe that he had killed a colonel and ridden off his horse, — who lived from hand — sometimes to mouth, — though it was commonly a glass of rum that the hand carried. He and his wife awaited their fate together in an old ruin in Walden woods. What life he got — or what means of death — he got by ditching.

I never was much acquainted with Hugh Quoil, though sometimes I met him in the path, and now do believe that a solid shank-bone, and skull which no longer aches, lie somewhere, and can still be produced, which once with garment of flesh and broadcloth were called and hired to do work as Hugh Quoil. He was a man of manners and gentlemanlike, as one who had seen the world, and was capable of more civil speech than you could well attend to. At a distance he had seemingly a ruddy face as of biting January, but nearer at hand it was bright carmine. It would have burnt your finger to touch his cheek. He wore a straight-bodied snuff-colored coat which had long been familiar with him, and carried a turf-knife in his hand — in-

stead of a sword. He had fought on the English side before, but he fought on the Napoleon side now. Napoleon went to St. Helena; Hugh Quoil came to Walden Pond. I heard that he used to tell travellers who inquired about myself that —— and Thoreau owned the *farm* together, but Thoreau lived on the *place* and carried it on.[1]

He was thirstier than I, and drank more, probably, but not out of the pond. That was never the lower for him. Perhaps I ate more than he. The last time I met him, the only time I spoke with him, was at the foot of the hill on the highway as I was crossing to the spring one summer afternoon, the pond water being too warm for me. I was crossing the road with a pail in my hand, when Quoil came down the hill, wearing his snuff-colored coat, as if it were winter, and shaking with delirium tremens. I hailed him and told him that my errand was to get water at a spring close by, only at the foot of the hill over the fence. He answered, with stuttering and parched lips, bloodshot eye, and staggering gesture, he 'd like to see it. "Follow me there, then." But I had got my pail full and back before he scaled the fence. And he, drawing his coat about him, to warm him, or to cool him, answered in delirium-tremens, hydrophobia dialect, which is not easy to be written here, he 'd heard of it, but had never seen it; and so shivered his way along to town, — to liquor and to oblivion.

On Sundays, brother Irishmen and others, who had gone far astray from steady habits and the village, crossed my bean-field with empty jugs toward Quoil's.

[1] [*Walden*, pp. 288, 289; Riv. 405.]

But what for? Did they sell rum there? I asked. "Respectable people they," "Know no harm of them," "Never heard that they drank too much," was the answer of all wayfarers. They went by sober, stealthy, silent, skulking (no harm to get elm bark Sundays); returned loquacious, sociable, having long intended to call on you.

At length one afternoon Hugh Quoil, feeling better, perchance, with snuff-colored coat, as usual, paced solitary and soldier-like, thinking [of] Waterloo, along the woodland road to the foot of the hill by the spring; and there the Fates met him, and threw him down in his snuff-colored coat on the gravel, and got ready to cut his thread; but not till travellers passed, who would raise him up, get him perpendicular, then settle, settle quick; but legs, what are they? "Lay me down," says Hugh hoarsely. "House locked up — key — in pocket — wife in town." And the Fates cut, and there he lay by the wayside, five feet ten, and looking taller than in life.

He has gone away; his house here "all tore to pieces." What kind of fighting or ditching work he finds to do now, how it fares with him, whether his thirst is quenched, whether there is still some semblance of that carmine cheek, struggles still with some liquid demon — perchance on more equal terms — till he swallow him completely, I cannot by any means learn. What his salutation is now, what his January-morning face, what he thinks of Waterloo, what start he has gained or lost, what work still for the ditcher and forester and soldier now, there is no evidence. He was here, the likes of him,

for a season, standing light in his shoes like a faded gentleman, with gesture almost learned in drawing-rooms; wore clothes, hat, shoes, cut ditches, felled wood, did farm work for various people, kindled fires, worked enough, ate enough, drank too much. He was one of those unnamed, countless sects of philosophers who founded no school.

Now that he was gone, and his wife was gone too, — for she could not support the solitude, — before it was too late and the house was torn down, I went over to make a call. Now that Irishmen with jugs avoided the old house, I visited it, — an "unlucky castle now," said they. There lay his old clothes curled up by habit, as if it were himself, upon his raised plank bed. His pipe lay broken on the hearth; and scattered about were soiled cards — king of diamonds, hearts, spades — on the floor. One black chicken, which they could not catch, still went to roost in the next apartment, stepping silent over the floor, frightened by the sound of its own wings, black as night and as silent, too, not even croaking; awaiting Reynard, its god actually dead. There was the dim outline of a garden which had been planted, but had never received its first hoeing, now overrun with weeds, with burs and cockles, which stick to your clothes; as if in the spring he had contemplated a harvest of corn and beans before that strange trembling of the limbs overtook him. Skin of woodchuck fresh-stretched, never to be cured, met once in bean-field by the Waterloo man with uplifted hoe; no cap, no mittens wanted. Pipe on hearth no more to be lighted, best buried with him.[1]

[1] [*Walden*, p. 289 ; Riv. 405, 406.]

No thirst for glory, only for strong drink.

Only the convalescent are conscious of the health of nature.

In case of an embargo there will be found to be old clothes enough in everybody's garret to last till the millennium. We are fond of news, novelties, new things. The bank-bill that is torn in two will pass if you save the pieces, if you have only got the essential piece with the signatures. Lowell and Manchester and Fall River think you will let go their broadcloth currency when it is torn; but hold on, have an eye to the signature about the back of it, and endorse the man's name from whom you received it, and they will be the first to fail and find nothing at all in their garrets. Every day our garments become more assimilated to the man that wears them, more near and dear to us, and not finally to be laid aside but with such delay and medical appliance and solemnity as our other mortal coil.[1] We know, after all, but few men, a great many coats and breeches. Dress a scarecrow with your last shift, you standing shiftless by, who would not soonest address the scarecrow and salute it? [2]

King James loved his old shoes best. Who does not? Indeed these new clothes are often won and worn only after a most painful birth. At first movable prisons, oyster-shells which the tide only raises, opens, and shuts, washing in what scanty nutriment may be afloat. How many men walk over the limits, carrying their

[1] [*Walden*, pp. 24, 26; Riv. 36, 40.] [2] [*Walden*, p. 24; Riv. 37.]

limits with them? In the stocks they stand, not without gaze of multitudes, only without rotten eggs, in torturing boots, the last wedge but one driven. Why should we be startled at death? Life is constant putting off of the mortal coil, — coat, cuticle, flesh and bones, all old clothes.

Not till the prisoner has got some rents in his prison walls, possibility of egress without lock and key some day, — result of steel watch-spring rubbing on iron grate, or whatever friction and wear and tear, — will he rest contented in his prison.

Clothes brought in sewing, a kind of work you may call endless.[1]

A man who has at length found out something important to do will not have to get a new suit to do it in. For him the old will do, lying dusty in the garret for an indefinite period. Old shoes will serve a hero longer than they have served his valet. Bare feet are the oldest of shoes, and he can make them do. Only they who go to legislature and soirées, — they must have new coats, coats to turn as often as the man turns in them. Who ever saw his old shoes, his old coat, actually worn out, returned to their original elements, so that it was not [a] deed [of] charity to bestow them on some poorer boy, and by him to be bestowed on some poorer still, or shall we say on some richer who can do with less?[2]

Over eastward of my bean-field lived Cato Ingraham, slave, born slave, perhaps, of Duncan Ingraham, Esquire, gentleman, of Concord village, who built him a house

[1] [*Walden*, p. 25; Riv. 38.] [2] [*Walden*, p. 25; Riv. 38, 39.]

and gave him permission to live in Walden Woods, for which no doubt he was thanked; and then, on the northeast corner, Zilpha, colored woman of fame; and down the road, on the right hand, Brister, colored man, on Brister's Hill, where grow still those little wild apples he tended, now large trees, but still wild and cider-ish to my taste; and farther still you come to Breed's location, and again on the left, by well and roadside, Nutting lived. Farther up the road, at the pond's end, Wyman, the potter, who furnished his townsmen with earthenware, — the squatter.[1]

Now only a dent in the earth marks the site of most of these human dwellings; sometimes the well-dent where a spring oozed, now dry and tearless grass, or covered deep, — not to be discovered till late days by accident, — with a flat stone under the sod. These dents, like deserted fox-burrows, old holes, where once was the stir and bustle of human life overhead, and man's destiny, "fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute," were all by turns discussed.

Still grows the vivacious lilac for a generation after the last vestige else is gone, unfolding still its early sweet-scented blossoms in the spring, to be plucked only by the musing traveller; planted, tended, weeded [?], watered by children's hands in front-yard plot, — now by wall-side in retired pasture, or giving place to a new rising forest. The last of that stirp, sole survivor of that family. Little did the dark children think that that weak slip with its two eyes which they watered would root itself so, and outlive them, and house in the rear that shaded

[1] [*Walden*, pp. 283, 284, 287, 288 ; Riv. 397–400, 404.]

it, and grown man's garden and field, and tell their story to the retired wanderer a half-century after they were no more, — blossoming as fair, smelling as sweet, as in that first spring. Its still cheerful, tender, civil lilac colors.[1]

The woodland road, though once more dark and shut in by the forest, resounded with the laugh and gossip of inhabitants, and was notched and dotted here and there with their little dwellings. Though now but a humble rapid passage to neighboring villages or for the woodman's team, it once delayed the traveller longer, and was a lesser village in itself.[2]

You still hear from time to time the whinnering of the raccoon, still living as of old in hollow trees, washing its food before it eats it. The red fox barks at night. The loon comes in the fall to sail and bathe in the pond, making the woods ring with its wild laughter in the early morning, at rumor of whose arrival all Concord sportsmen are on the alert, in gigs, on foot, two by two, three [by three], with patent rifles, patches, conical balls, spy-glass or open hole over the barrel. They seem already to hear the loon laugh; come rustling through the woods like October leaves, these on this side, those on that, for the poor loon cannot be omnipresent; if he dive here, must come up somewhere. The October wind rises, rustling the leaves, ruffling the pond water, so that no loon can be seen rippling the surface. Our sportsmen scour, sweep the pond with spy-glass in vain, making the woods ring with rude [?] charges of powder, for the

[1] [*Walden*, pp. 289–291; Riv. 406–408.]

[2] [*Walden*, pp. 282, 283; Riv. 396, 397.]

loon went off in that morning rain with one loud, long, hearty laugh, and our sportsmen must beat a retreat to town and stable and daily routine, shop work, unfinished jobs again.[1]

Or in the gray dawn the sleeper hears the long ducking gun explode over toward Goose Pond, and, hastening to the door, sees the remnant of a flock, black duck or teal, go whistling by with outstretched neck, with broken ranks, but in ranger order. And the silent hunter emerges into the carriage road with ruffled feathers at his belt, from the dark pond-side where he has lain in his bower since the stars went out.

And for a week you hear the circling clamor, clangor, of some solitary goose through the fog, seeking its mate, peopling the woods with a larger life than they can hold.[2]

For hours in fall days you shall watch the ducks cunningly tack and veer and hold the middle of the pond, far from the sportsman on the shore, — tricks they have learned and practiced in far Canada lakes or in Louisiana bayous.[3]

The waves rise and dash, taking sides with all waterfowl.[4]

Then in dark winter mornings, in short winter afternoons, the pack of hounds, threading all woods with hounding cry and yelp, unable to resist the instinct of

[1] [*Walden*, pp. 258, 259; Riv. 363, 364.]
[2] [*Walden*, p. 345; Riv. 483.]
[3] [*Walden*, p. 262; Riv. 368.]
[4] [*Walden*, p. 259; Riv. 364.]

the chase, and note of hunting-horn at intervals, showing that man too is in the rear. And the woods ring again, and yet no fox bursts forth on to the open level of the pond, and no following pack after their Actæon.[1]

But this small village, germ of something more, why did it fail while Concord grows apace? No natural advantages, no water privilege, only the deep Walden Pond and cool Brister's Spring, — privileges to drink long, healthy, pure draughts, alas, all unimproved by those men but to dilute their glass. Might not the basket-making, stable-broom, mat-making, corn-parching, potters' business have thrived here, making the wilderness to blossom as the rose? Now, all too late for commerce, this waste, depopulated district has its railroad too. And transmitted the names of unborn Bristers, Catos, Hildas,[2] Zilphas to a remote and grateful posterity.

Again Nature will try, with me for a first settler, and my house raised last spring to be the oldest in the settlement.

The sterile soil would have been proof against any lowland degeneracy.[3]

Farmers far and near call it the paradise of beans.

And here, too, on winter days, while yet is cold January, and snow and ice lie thick, comes the prudent, foreseeing landlord or housekeeper (anticipating thirst) from the village, to get ice to cool his summer drink, —

[1] [*Walden*, p 305; Riv. 428.]

[2] ["Hilda" was originally written where "Nutting" appears on p. 420.]

[3] [*Walden*, p. 292; Riv. 408, 409.]

a grateful beverage if he should live, if time should endure so long. How few so wise, so industrious, to lay up treasures which neither rust nor melt, "to cool their summer drink" one day!

And cut off the solid pond, the element and air of fishes, held fast with chain and stake like corded wood, all through favoring, willing, kind, permitting winter air to wintery cellar, to underlie the summer there. And cut and saw the cream of the pond, unroof the house of fishes.[1]

And in early mornings come men with fishing-reels and slender lunch, men of real faith, and let down their fine lines and live minnows through the snowy field to hook the pickerel and perch.[2]

With buried well-stones, and strawberries, raspberries, thimble-berries growing on the sunny sward there; some pitchy pine or gnarled oak in the chimney-nook, or the sweet-scented black birch where the doorstone was.[3]

Breed's, — history must not yet tell the tragedies enacted there. Let time intervene to assuage and lend an azure atmospheric tint to them.[4]

There is something pathetic in the sedentary life of men who have travelled. They must naturally die when they leave the road.

[1] [*Walden*, pp. 323, 324; Riv. 452, 453.]
[2] [*Walden*, p. 313; Riv. 438.]
[3] [*Walden*, pp. 289, 290; Riv. 406, 407.]
[4] [*Walden*, p. 285; Riv. 400.]

What seems so fair and poetic in antiquity — almost fabulous — is realized, too, in Concord life. As poets and historians brought their work to the Grecian games, and genius wrestled there as well as strength of body, so have we seen works of kindred genius read at our Concord games, by their author, in their own Concord amphitheatre. It is virtually repeated by all ages and nations.[1]

Moles nesting in your cellar and nibbling every third potato.[2] A whole rabbit-warren only separated from you by the flooring. To be saluted when you stir in the dawn by the hasty departure of Monsieur, — thump, thump, thump, striking his head against the floor-timbers.[3] Squirrels and field mice that hold to a community of property in your stock of chestnuts.

The blue jays suffered few chestnuts to reach the ground, resorting to your single tree in flocks in the early morning, and picking them out of the burs at a great advantage.

The crop of blackberries small; berries not yet grown. Ground-nuts not dug.

One wonders how so much, after all, was expressed in the old way, so much here depends upon the emphasis, tone, pronunciation, style, and spirit of the reading. No writer uses so profusely all the aids to intelligibility which the printer's art affords. You wonder

[1] [See *Week*, p. 102; Riv. 127.]
[2] [*Walden*, p. 280; Riv. 392, 393.]
[3] [*Walden*, p. 309; Riv. 434.]

how others had contrived to write so many pages without emphatic, italicized words, they are so expressive, so natural and indispensable, here. As if none had ever used the demonstrative pronoun demonstratively. In another's sentences the thought, though immortal, is, as it were, embalmed and does not *strike* you, but here it is so freshly living, not purified by the ordeal of death, that it stirs in the very extremities, the smallest particles and pronouns are all alive with it. — You must not say it, but *it*. It is not simple it, your it or mine, but *it*. His books are solid, workmanlike, like all that England does. They tell of endless labor done, well done, and all the rubbish swept away, like this bright cutlery which glitters in the windows, while the coke and ashes, turnings, filings, borings, dust lie far away at Birmingham, unheard of. The words did not come at the command of grammar but of a tyrannous, inexorable meaning; not like the standing soldiers, by vote of Parliament, but any able-bodied countryman pressed into the service. It is no China war, but a revolution. This style is worth attending to as one of the most important features of the man that we at this distance know.[1]

What are the men of New England about? I have travelled some in New England, especially in Concord, and I found that no enterprise was on foot which it would not disgrace a man to take part in. They seemed to be employed everywhere in shops and offices and fields. They seemed, like the Brahmins of the East, to

[1] [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, pp. 325-327; *Misc.*, Riv. 93–95 ("Thomas Carlyle and his Works").]

be doing penance in a thousand curious, unheard-of ways, their endurance surpassing anything I had ever seen or heard of, — Simeon Stylites, Brahmins looking in the face of the sun, standing on one leg, dwelling at the roots of trees, nothing to it; any of the twelve labors of Hercules to be matched, — the Nemean lion, Lernæan hydra, Œnœan stag, Erymanthian boar, Augean stables, Stymphalian birds, Cretan bull, Diomedes' mares, Amazonian girdle, monster Geryon, Hesperian apples, three-headed Cerberus, nothing at all in comparison, being only twelve and having an end. For I could never see that these men ever slew or captured any of their monsters, or finished any of their labors. They have no "friend Iolaus to burn, with a hot iron, the root" of the hydra's head; for as soon as one head is crushed, two spring up.[1]

Men labor under a mistake; they are laying up treasures which moth and rust will corrupt and thieves break through and steal. Northern Slavery, or the slavery which includes the Southern, Eastern, Western, and all others.[2]

It is hard to have a Southern overseer; it is worse to have a Northern one; but worst of all when you are yourself the slave-driver. Look at the lonely teamster on the highway, wending to market by day or night; is he a son of the morning, with somewhat of divinity in him, fearless because immortal, going to receive his birthright, greeting the sun as his fellow, bounding with youthful, gigantic strength over his mother earth? See

[1] [*Walden*, pp. 4, 5; Riv. 9, 10.]

[2] [*Walden*, pp. 6, 8; Riv. 11, 14.]

how he cowers and sneaks, how vaguely, indefinitely all the day he fears, not being immortal, not divine, the slave and prisoner of his own opinion of himself, fame which he has earned by his own deeds. Public opinion is a weak tyrant compared with private opinion. What I think of myself, that determines my fate.[1]

I see young men, my equals, who have inherited from their spiritual father a soul, — broad, fertile, uncultivated, — from their earthly father a farm, — with cattle and barns and farming tools, the implements of the picklock and the counterfeiter. Better if they had been born in the open pasture and suckled by a wolf, or perhaps cradled in a manger, that they might have seen with clear eye what was the field they were called to labor in. The young man has got to live a man's life, then, in this world, pushing all these things before him, and get on as well as he can. How many a poor immortal soul I have met, well-nigh crushed and smothered, creeping slowly down the road of life, pushing before it a barn seventy-five by forty feet and one hundred acres of land, — tillage, pasture, wood-lot! This dull, opaque garment of the flesh is load enough for the strongest spirit, but with such an earthly garment superadded the spiritual life is soon plowed into the soil for compost. It 's a fool's life, as they will all find when they get to the end of it. The man that goes on accumulating property when the bare necessaries of life are cared for is a fool and knows better.[2]

There is a stronger desire to be respectable to one's neighbors than to one's self.

[1] [*Walden*, p. 8 ; Riv. 14, 15.] [2] [*Walden*, pp. 5, 6 ; Riv. 10, 11.]

However, such distinctions as poet, philosopher, literary man, etc., do not much assist our final estimate. We do not lay much stress on them; "a man's a man for a' that." Any writer who interests us much is all and more than these.

It is not simple dictionary it.[1]

Talent at making books solid, workmanlike, graceful, which may be read.[2]

Some idyllic chapter or chapters are needed.

In the French Revolution are Mirabeau, king of men; Danton, Titan of the Revolution; Camille Desmoulins, poetic editor; Roland, heroic woman; Dumouriez, first efficient general: on the other side, Marat, friend of the people; Robespierre; Tinville, infernal judge; St. Just; etc., etc.

Nutting and Le Gros by the wall-side. The Stratten house and barn where the orchard covered all the slope of Brister's Hill, — now killed out by the pines.

Brister Freeman, a handy negro, slave once of Squire Cummings (?), and Fenda, his hospitable, pleasant wife, large, round, black, who told fortunes, blacker than all the children of night, such a dusky orb as had never risen on Concord before.

Zilpha's little house where "she was spinning linen," making the Walden woods ring with her shrill singing, — a loud, shrill, remarkable voice, — when once she

[1] [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, p. 327; *Misc.*, Riv. 95 ("Thomas Carlyle and his Works").]

[2] [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, p. 325; *Misc.*, Riv. 93 ("Thomas Carlyle and his Works").]

was away to town, set on fire by English soldiers on parole, in the last war, and cat and dog and hens all burned up. Boiling her witch's dinner, and heard muttering to herself over the gurgling pot by silent traveller, "Ye are all bones, bones."

And Cato, the Guinea negro, — his house and little patch among the walnuts, — who let the trees grow up till he should be old, and Richardson got them.

Where Breed's house stood tradition says a tavern once stood, the well the same, and all a swamp between the woods and town, and road made on logs.[1]

Bread I made pretty well for awhile, while I remembered the rules; for I studied this out methodically, going clear back to the primitive days and first invention of the unleavened kind, and coming gradually down through that lucky accidental souring of the dough which taught men the leavening process, and all the various fermentations thereafter, till you get to "good, sweet, wholesome bread," the staff of life. I went on very well, mixing rye and flour and Indian and potato with success, till one morning I had forgotten the rules, and thereafter scalded the yeast, — killed it out, — and so, after the lapse of a month, was glad after all to learn that such palatable staff of life could be made out of the dead and scalt creature and risings that lay flat.

I have hardly met with the housewife who has gone so far with this mystery. For all the farmers' wives pause at yeast. Given this and they can make bread.

[1] [*Walden*, pp. 283–285, 287, 288; Riv. 397–400, 404.]

It is the axiom of the argument. What it is, where it came from, in what era bestowed on man, is wrapped in mystery. It is preserved religiously, like the vestal fire, and its virtue is not yet run out. Some precious bottleful, first brought over in the Mayflower, did the business for America, and its influence is still rising, swelling, spreading like Atlantic billows over the land, — the soul of bread, the spiritus, occupying its cellular tissue.[1]

The way to compare men is to compare their respective ideals. The actual man is too complex to deal with.

Carlyle is an earnest, honest, heroic worker as literary man and sympathizing brother of his race.

Idealize a man, and your notion takes distinctness at once.

Carlyle's talent is perhaps quite equal to his genius.[2]

Striving [?] to live in reality, — not a general critic, philosopher, or poet.

Wordsworth, with very feeble talent, has not so great and admirable as unquestionable and persevering genius.

Heroism, heroism is his word, — his thing.

He would realize a brave and adequate human life, and die hopefully at last.

Emerson again is a critic, poet, philosopher, with talent not so conspicuous, not so adequate to his task; but his field is still higher, his task more arduous. Lives

[1] [*Walden*, pp. 68, 69; Riv. 99, 100.]

[2] [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, p. 348; *Misc.*, Riv. 121 ("Thomas Carlyle and his Works").]

a far more intense life; seeks to realize a divine life; his affections and intellect equally developed. Has advanced farther, and a new heaven opens to him. Love and Friendship, Religion, Poetry, the Holy are familiar to him. The life of an Artist; more variegated, more observing, finer perception; not so robust, elastic; practical enough in his own field; faithful, a judge of men. There is no such general critic of men and things, no such trustworthy and faithful man. More of the divine realized in him than in any. A poetic critic, reserving the unqualified nouns for the gods.

Alcott is a geometer, a visionary, the Laplace of ethics, more intellect, less of the affections, sight beyond talents, a substratum of practical skill and knowledge unquestionable, but overlaid and concealed by a faith in the unseen and impracticable. Seeks to realize an ẽntire life; a catholic observer; habitually takes in the farthest star and nebula into his scheme. Will be the last man to be disappointed as the ages revolve. His attitude is one of greater faith and expectation than that of any man I know; with little to show; with undue share, for a philosopher, of the weaknesses of humanity. The most hospitable intellect, embracing high and low. For children how much that means, for the insane and vagabond, for the poet and scholar! [1]

Emerson has special talents unequalled. The divine in man has had no more easy, methodically distinct expression. His personal influence upon young per-

[1] [*Walden*, p. 296; Riv. 415, 416.]

sons greater than any man's. In his world every man would be a poet, Love would reign, Beauty would take place, Man and Nature would harmonize.

When Alcott's day comes, laws unsuspected by most will take effect,[1] the system will crystallize according to them, all seals and falsehood will slough off, everything will be in its place.

Feb. 22 [no year]. Jean Lapin sat at my door to-day, three paces from me, at first trembling with fear, yet unwilling to move; a poor, wee thing, lean and bony, with ragged ears and sharp nose, scant tail and slender paws. It looked as if nature no longer contained the breed of nobler bloods, the earth stood on its last legs. Is nature, too, unsound at last? I took two steps, and lo, away he scud with elastic spring over the snowy crust into the bushes, a free creature of the forest, still wild and fleet; and such then was his nature, and his motion asserted its vigor and dignity. Its large eye looked at first young and diseased, almost dropsical, unhealthy. But it bound[ed] free, the venison, straightening its body and its limbs into graceful length, and soon put the forest between me and itself.[2]

Emerson does not consider things in respect to their essential utility, but an important partial and relative one, as works of art perhaps. His probes pass one side of their centre of gravity. His exaggeration is of a part, not of the whole.

[1] [*Walden*, p. 296; Riv. 415.] [2] [*Walden*, p. 310; Riv. 434, 435.]

How many an afternoon has been stolen from more profitable, if not more attractive, industry, — afternoons when a good run of custom might have been expected on the main street, such as tempt the ladies out a-shopping, — spent, I say, by me away in the meadows, in the well-nigh hopeless attempt to set the river on fire or be set on fire by it, with such tinder as I had, with such flint as I was. Trying at least to make it flow with milk and honey, as I had heard of, or liquid gold, and drown myself without getting wet, — a laudable enterprise, though I have not much to show for it.

So many autumn days spent outside the town, trying to hear what was in the wind, to hear it and carry it express. I well-nigh sunk all my capital in it, and lost my own breath into the bargain, by running in the face of it. Depend upon it, if it had concerned either of the parties, it would have appeared in the yeoman's gazette, the *Freeman*, with other earliest intelligence.

For many years I was self-appointed inspector of snow-storms and rain-storms, and did my duty faithfully, though I never received one cent for it.

Surveyor, if not of higher ways, then of forest paths and all across-lot routes, keeping many open ravines bridged and passable at all seasons, where the public heel had testified to the importance of the same, all not only without charge, but even at considerable risk and inconvenience. Many a mower would have forborne to complain had he been aware of the invisible public good that was in jeopardy.

So I went on, I may say without boasting, I trust, faithfully minding my business without a partner, till

it became more and more evident that my townsmen would not, after all, admit me into the list of town officers, nor make the place a sinecure with moderate allowance.

I have looked after the wild stock of the town, which pastures in common, and every one knows that these cattle give you a good deal of trouble in the way of leaping fences. I have counted and registered all the eggs I could find at least, and have had an eye to all nooks and corners of the farm, though I did n't always know whether Jonas or Solomon worked in a particular field to-day; that was none of my business. I only knew him for one of the men, and trusted that he was as well employed as I was. I had to make my daily entries in the general farm book, and my duties may sometimes have made me a little stubborn and unyielding.

Many a day spent on the hilltops waiting for the sky to fall, that I might catch something, though I never caught much, only a little, manna-wise, that would dissolve again in the sun.

My accounts, indeed, which I can swear to have been faithfully kept, I have never got audited, still less accepted, still less paid and settled. However, I have n't set my heart upon *that*.

I have watered the red huckleberry and the sand cherry and the hoopwood [?] tree, and the cornel and spoonhunt and yellow violet, which might have withered else in dry seasons. The white grape.

To find the bottom of Walden Pond, and what inlet and outlet it might have.

I found at length that, as they were not likely to offer me any office in the court-house, any curacy or living anywhere else, I must shift for myself, I must furnish myself with the necessaries of life.

Now watching from the observatory of the Cliffs or Annursnack to telegraph any new arrival, to see if Wachusett, Watatic, or Monadnock had got any nearer. Climbing trees for the same purpose. I have been reporter for many years to one of the journals of no very wide circulation, and, as is too common, got only my pains for my labor. Literary contracts are little binding.[1]

The unlimited anxiety, strain, and care of some persons is one very incurable form of disease. Simple arithmetic might have corrected it; for the life of every man has, after all, an epic integrity, and Nature adapts herself to our weaknesses and deficiencies as well as talents.

No doubt it is indispensable that we should do *our* work between sun and sun, but only a wise man will know what that is. And yet how much work will be left undone, put off to the next day, and yet the system goes on!

We presume commonly to take care of ourselves, and trust as little as possible. Vigilant more or less all our days, we say our prayers at night and commit ourselves to uncertainties, as if in our very days and most vigilant moments the great part were not a necessary trust still.[2] How serenity, anxiety, confidence, fear paint the heavens for us.

[1] [*Walden*, pp. 19-21 ; Riv. 30–33.]
[2] [*Walden*, p. 12 ; Riv. 19, 20.]

All the laws of nature will bend and adapt themselves to the least motion of man.

All change is a miracle to contemplate, but it is a miracle which is taking place unobserved every instant; when all is ready it takes place, and only a miracle could stay it.

We [are] compelled to live so thoroughly and sincerely, reflecting on our steps, reverencing our life, that we never make allowance for the possible changes.

We may waive just so much care of ourselves as we devote of care elsewhere.[1]

[1] [*Walden*, p. 12 ; Riv. 20.]

IX

1837–1847

(ÆT. 20–30)

[This chapter consists of paragraphs (chiefly undated) taken from a large commonplace-book containing transcripts from earlier journals. Thoreau drew largely from this book in writing the "Week," and to a less extent in writing "Walden." Passages used in these volumes (as far as noted), and those duplicating earlier journal entries already printed in the preceding pages, have been omitted. All the matter in the book appears to have been written before 1847.]

I was born upon thy bank, river,
My blood flows in thy stream,
And thou meanderest forever
At the bottom of my dream.

This great but silent traveller which had been so long moving past my door at three miles an hour, — might I not trust myself under its escort?

In friendship we worship moral beauty without the formality of religion.

Consider how much the sun and the summer, the buds of spring and the sered leaves of autumn, are re-

lated to the cabins of the settlers which we discover on the shore, — how all the rays which paint the landscape radiate from them. The flight of the crow and the gyrations of the hawk have reference to their roofs.

Friends do not interchange their common wealth, but each puts his finger into the private coffer of the other. They will be most familiar, they will be most unfamiliar, for they will be so one and single that common themes will not have to be bandied between them, but in silence they will digest them as one mind; but they will at the same time be so two and double that each will be to the other as admirable and as inaccessible as a star. He will view him as it were through "optic glass," — "at evening from the top of Fesolé." And after the longest earthly period, he will still be in apogee to him.

It [the boat] had been loaded at the door the evening before, half a mile from the river, and provided with wheels against emergencies, but, with the bulky cargo which we stevedores had stowed in it, it proved but an indifferent land carriage. For water and water-casks there was a plentiful supply of muskmelons from our patch, which had just begun to be ripe, and chests and spare spars and sails and tent and guns and munitions for the galleon. And as we pushed it through the meadows to the river's bank, we stepped as lightly about it as if a portion of our own bulk and burden was stored in its hold. We were amazed to find ourselves outside still, with scarcely independent force enough to push or pull effectually.

The robin is seen flying directly and high in the air at this season, especially over rivers, where in the morning they are constantly passing and repassing in company with the blackbird.

I have never insisted enough on the nakedness and simplicity of friendship, the result of all emotions, their subsidence, a fruit of the temperate zone. The friend is an unrelated man, solitary and of distinct outline.

Must not our whole lives go unexplained, without regard to us, notwithstanding a few flourishes of ours, which themselves need explanation?

Yet a friend does not afford us cheap contrasts or encounters. He forbears to ask explanations, but doubts and surmises with full faith, as we silently ponder our fates. He is vested with full powers, plenipotentiary, all in all.

"Plato gives science sublime counsels, directs her toward the regions of the ideal; Aristotle gives her positive and severe laws, and directs her toward a practical end." — DEGERANDO.

All day the dark blue outline of Crotched mountain in Goffstown skirted the horizon. We took pleasure in beholding its outline, because at this distance our vision could so easily grasp the design of the founder. It was a pretty victory to conquer the distance and dimensions so easily with our eyes, which it would take our feet so long to traverse.

Notwithstanding the unexplained mystery of nature, man still pursues his studies with confidence, ever ready to grasp the secret, as if the truth were only contained, not withheld; as one of the three circles on the cocoanut is always so soft that it may be pierced with a thorn, and the traveller is grateful for the thick shell which held the liquor so faithfully.

Gracefulness is undulatory like these waves, and perhaps the sailor acquires a superior suppleness and grace through the planks of his ship from the element on which he lives.

The song sparrow, whose voice is one of the first heard in the spring, sings occasionally throughout the season, from a greater depth in the summer, as it were behind the notes of other birds.

As the temperature and density of the atmosphere, so the aspects of our life vary.

In this bright and chaste light the world seemed like a pavilion made for holidays and washed in light. The ocean was a summer's lake, and the land a smooth lawn for disport, while in the horizon the sunshine seemed to fall on walled towns and villas, and the course of our lives was seen winding on like a country road over the plain.[1]

When we looked out from under our tent, the trees were seen dimly through the mist, and a cool dew hung

[1] [*Week*, p. 45; Riv. 57.]

upon the grass, and in the damp air we seemed to inhale a solid fragrance.

Communicating with the villas and hills and forests on either hand, by the glances we sent them, or the echoes we awakened. We glanced up many a pleasant ravine with its farmhouse in the distance, where some contributory stream came in; again the site of a saw-mill and a few forsaken eel-pots were all that greeted us.[1]

While we sail here we can remember unreservedly those friends who dwell far away on the banks and by the sources of this very river, and people this world for us, without any harsh and unfriendly interruptions.

At noon his horn[2] is heard echoing from shore to shore to give notice of his approach to the farmer's wife with whom he is to take his dinner, frequently in such retired scenes that only muskrats and kingfishers seem to hear.

If ever our idea of a friend is realized it will be in some broad and generous natural person, as frank as the daylight, in whose presence our behavior will be as simple and unconstrained as the wanderer amid the recesses of these hills.

I who sail now in a boat, have I not sailed in a thought? *Vide* Chaucer.

[1] [This follows matter used on p. 81 of *Week* (Riv. 101).]

[2] [The boatman's. See *Week*, p. 222; Riv. 276.]

The hardest material obeys the same law with the most fluid. Trees are but rivers of sap and woody fibre flowing from the atmosphere and emptying into the earth by their trunks, as their roots flow upward to the surface. And in the heavens there are rivers of stars and milky ways. There are rivers of rock on the surface and rivers of ore in the bowels of the earth. And thoughts flow and circulate, and seasons lapse as tributaries of the current year.

Consider the phenomena of morn, or eve, and you will say that Nature has perfected herself by an eternity of practice, — evening stealing over the fields, the stars coming to bathe in retired waters, the shadows of the trees creeping farther and farther into the meadows, and a myriad phenomena beside.

Occasionally we had to muster all our energy to get round a point where the river broke rippling over rocks and the maples trailed their branches in the stream.

The future reader of history will associate this generation with the red man in his thoughts, and give it credit for some sympathy with that race. Our history will have some copper tints and reflections, at least, and be read as through an Indian-summer haze; but such were not our associations. But the Indian is absolutely forgotten but by some persevering poets.

The white man has commenced a new era. What do our anniversaries commemorate but white men's exploits? For Indian deeds there must be an Indian mem-

ory; the white man will remember his own only. We have forgotten their hostility as well as friendship. Who can realize that, within the memory of this generation, the remnant of an ancient and dusky race of mortals called the Stockbridge Indians, within the limits of this very State, furnished a company for the war, on condition only that they should not be expected to fight white man's fashion, or to train, but Indian fashion. And occasionally their wigwams are seen on the banks of this very stream still, solitary and inobvious, like the cabins of the muskrats in the meadows.

They seem like a race who have exhausted the secrets of nature, tanned with age, while this young and still fair Saxon slip, on whom the sun has not long shone, is but commencing its career.

. . . . . .

Their memory is in harmony with the russet hue of the fall of the year.[1]

For the Indian there is no safety but in the plow. If he would not be pushed into the Pacific, he must seize hold of a plow-tail and let go his bow and arrow, his fish-spear and rifle. This the only Christianity that will save him.[2]

His fate says sternly to him, "Forsake the hunter's life and enter into the agricultural, the second, state of man. Root yourselves a little deeper in the soil, if you would continue to be the occupants of the country."

[1] [See p. 337.]

[2] [This and the succeeding paragraphs on the Indian were written in pencil on loose sheets of paper and slipped between the pages of the Journal.]

But I confess I have no little sympathy with the Indians and hunter men. They seem to me a distinct and equally respectable people, born to wander and to hunt, and not to be inoculated with the twilight civilization of the white man.

Father Le Jeune, a French missionary, affirmed "that the Indians were superior in intellect to the French peasantry of that time," and advised "that laborers should be sent from France in order to work for the Indians."

The Indian population within the present boundaries of New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut has been estimated not to have exceeded 40,000 "before the epidemic disease which preceded the landing of the Pilgrims," and it was far more dense here than elsewhere; yet they had no more land than they wanted. The present white population is more than 1,500,000 and two thirds of the land is unimproved.

The Indian, perchance, has not made up his mind to some things which the white man has consented to; he has not, in all respects, stooped so low; and hence, though he too loves food and warmth, he draws his tattered blanket about him and follows his fathers, rather than barter his birthright. He dies, and no doubt his Genius judges well for him. But he is not worsted in the fight; he is not destroyed. He only migrates beyond the Pacific to more spacious and happier hunting-grounds.

A race of hunters can never withstand the inroads of a race of husbandmen. The latter burrow in the

night into their country and undermine them; and [even] if the hunter is brave enough to resist, his game is timid and has already fled. The rifle alone would never exterminate it, but the plow is a more fatal weapon; it wins the country inch by inch and holds all it gets.

What detained the Cherokees so long was the 2923 plows which that people possessed; and if they had grasped their handles more firmly, they would never have been driven beyond the Mississippi. No sense of justice will ever restrain the farmer from plowing up the land which is only hunted over by his neighbors. No hunting-field was ever well fenced and surveyed and its bounds accurately marked, unless it were an English park. It is a property not held by the hunter so much as by the game which roams it, and was never well secured by warranty deeds. The farmer in his treaties says only, or means only, "So far will I plow this summer," for he has not seed corn enough to plant more; but every summer the seed is grown which plants a new strip of the forest.

The African will survive, for he is docile, and is patiently learning his trade and dancing at his labor; but the Indian does not often dance, unless it be the war dance.

In whatever moment we awake to life, as now I this evening, after walking along the bank and hearing the same evening sounds that were heard of yore, it seems to have slumbered just below the surface, as in the spring the new verdure which covers the fields has never retreated far from the winter.

All actions and objects and events lose their *distinct* importance in this hour, in the brightness of the vision, as, when sometimes the pure light that attends the setting sun falls on the trees and houses, the light itself is the phenomenon, and no single object is so distinct to our admiration as the light itself.

If criticism is liable to abuse, it has yet a great and humane apology. When my sentiments aspire to be universal, then my neighbor has an equal interest to see that the expression be just, with myself.

My friends, why should we live?
  Life is an idle war, a toilsome peace;
To-day I would not give
  One small consent for its securest ease.

Shall we outwear the year
  In our pavilions on its dusty plain,
And yet no signal hear
  To strike our tents and take the road again?

Or else drag up the slope
  The heavy ordnance of religion's train?
Useless, but in the hope
  Some far remote and heavenward hill to gain.

The tortoises rapidly dropped into the water, as our boat ruffled the surface amid the willows. We glided along through the transparent water, breaking the reflections of the trees.

Not only are we late to find our friends, but mankind are late, and there is no record of a great success in history.

My friend is not chiefly wise or beautiful or noble. At least it is not for me to know it. He has no visible form nor appreciable character. I can never praise him nor esteem him praiseworthy, for I should sunder him from myself and put a bar between us. Let him not think he can please me by any behavior or even treat me well enough. When he treats, I retreat.[1]

I know of no rule which holds so true as that we are always paid for our suspicion by finding what we suspect. There can be no fairer recompense than this. Our suspicions exercise a demoniacal power over the subject of them. By some obscure law of influence, when we are perhaps unconsciously the subject of another's suspicion, we feel a strong impulse, even when it is contrary to our nature, to do that which he expects but reprobates.

No man seems to be aware that his influence is the result of his entire character, both that which is subject and that which is superior to his understanding, and what he really means or intends it is not in his power to explain or offer an apology for.

No man was ever party to a secure and settled friendship. It is no more a constant phenomenon than

[1] [See *Week*, pp. 286, 287; Riv. 356.]

meteors and lightning. It is a war of positions, of silent tactics.

I mark the summer's swift decline;
The springing sward its grave-clothes weaves.[1]

Oh, could I catch the sounds remote!
Could I but tell to human ear
The strains which on the breezes float
And sing the requiem of the dying year!

Sept. 29, 1842. To-day the lark sings again down in the meadow, and the robin peeps, and the bluebirds, old and young, have revisited their box, as if they would fain repeat the summer without the intervention of winter, if Nature would let them.

Beauty is a finer utility whose end we do not see.

Oct. 7, 1842. A little girl has just brought me a purple finch or American linnet. These birds are now moving south. It reminds me of the pine and spruce, and the juniper and cedar on whose berries it feeds. It has the crimson hues of the October evenings, and its plumage still shines as if it had caught and preserved some of their tints (beams?). We know it chiefly as a traveller. It reminds me of many things I had forgotten. Many a serene evening lies snugly packed under its wing.

[1] *Vide* the Fall of the Leaf poem. [This note is written in pencil between this line and the following stanza. The poem referred to is reprinted (without these lines) in *Excursions, and Poems*, p. 407.]

Gower writes like a man of common sense and good parts who has undertaken with steady, rather than high, purpose to do narrative with rhyme. With little or no invention, following in the track of the old fablers, he employs his leisure and his pen-craft to entertain his readers and speak a good word for the right. He has no fire, or rather blaze, though occasionally some brand's end peeps out from the ashes, especially if you approach the heap in a dark day, and if you extend your hands over it you experience a slight warmth there more than elsewhere. In fair weather you may see a slight smoke go up here and there. He narrates what Chaucer sometimes sings. He tells his story with a fair understanding of the original, and sometimes it gains a little in blunt plainness and in point in his hands. Unlike the early Saxon and later English, his poetry is but a plainer and directer speech than other men's prose. He might have been a teamster and written his rhymes on his wagon-seat as he went to mill with a load of plaster.

The banks by retired roadsides are covered with asters, hazels, brakes, and huckleberry bushes, emitting a dry, ripe scent.[1]

Facts must be learned directly and personally, but principles may be deduced from information. The collector of facts possesses a perfect physical organization, the philosopher a perfect intellectual one. One

[1] [This refers to the middle of September and follows matter used in *Week*, on p. 357 (Riv. 443).]

can walk, the other sit; one acts, the other thinks. But the poet in some degree does both, and uses and generalizes the results of both; he generalizes the widest deductions of philosophy.[1]

Oct. 21, 1842. The atmosphere is so dry and transparent and, as it were, inflammable at this season that a candle in the grass shines white and dazzling, and purer and brighter the farther off it is. Its heat seems to have been extracted and only its harmless refulgent light left. It is a star dropped down. The ancients were more than poetically true when they called fire Vulcan's flower. Light is somewhat almost moral. The most intense — as the fixed stars and our own sun — has an unquestionable preëminence among the elements. At a certain stage in the generation of all life, no doubt, light as well as heat is developed. It guides to the first rudiments of life. There is a vitality in heat and light.

Men who are felt rather than understood are being most rapidly developed. They stand many deep.

In many parts the Merrimack is as wild and natural as ever, and the shore and surrounding scenery exhibit only the revolutions of nature. The pine stands up erect on its brink, and the alders and willows fringe its edge; only the beaver and the red man have departed.

My friend knows me face to face, but many only

[1] [*Week*, p. 387; Riv. 478.]

venture to meet me under the shield of another's authority, backed by an invisible *corps du réserve* of wise friends and relations. To such I say, "Farewell, we cannot dwell alone in the world."

Sometimes, by a pleasing, sad wisdom, we find ourselves carried beyond all counsel and sympathy. Our friends' words do not reach us.

The truly noble and settled character of a man is not put forward, as the king or conqueror does not march foremost in a procession.

Among others I have picked up a curious spherical stone, probably an implement of war, like a small paving-stone about the size of a goose egg, with a groove worn quite round it, by which it was probably fastened to a thong or a withe and answered to strike a severe blow like a shotted colt. I have since seen larger ones of the same description.

These arrowheads are of every color and of various forms and materials, though commonly made of a stone which has a conchoidal fracture. Many small ones are found, of white quartz, which are mere equilateral triangles, with one side slightly convex. These were probably small shot for birds and squirrels. The chips which were made in their manufacture are also found in large numbers wherever a lodge stood for any length of time. And these slivers are the surest indication of Indian ground, since the geologists tell us that this stone is not to be found in this vicinity.

The spear-heads are of the same form and material only larger.

Some are found as perfect and sharp as ever, for time has not the effect of blunting them, but when they break they have a ragged and cutting edge. Yet they are so brittle that they can hardly be carried in the pocket without being broken.

It is a matter of wonder how the Indians made even those rude implements without iron or steel tools to work with. It is doubtful whether one of our mechanics, with all the aids of Yankee ingenuity, could soon learn to copy one of the thousands under our feet. It is well known the art of making flints with a cold chisel, as practiced in Austria, requires long practice and knack in the operator, but the arrowhead is of much more irregular form, and, like the flint, such is the nature of the stone, must be struck out by a succession of skillful blows.

An Indian to whom I once exhibited some, but to whom they were objects of as much curiosity as [to] myself, suggested that, as white men have but one blacksmith, so Indians had one arrowhead-maker for many families. But there are the marks of too many forges — unless they were like travelling cobblers — to allow of this.

I have seen some arrowheads from the South Seas which were precisely similar to those from here, so necessary, so little whimsical is this little tool.

So has the steel hatchet its prototype in the stone one of the Indian, as the stone hatchet in the necessities of man.

Venerable are these ancient arts, whose early history is lost in that of the race itself.

Here, too, is the pestle and mortar, — ancient forms and symbols older than the plow or the spade.

The invention of that plow which now turns them up to the surface marks the era of their burial. An era which can never have its history, which is older than history itself. These are relics of an era older than modern civilization, compared with which Greece and Rome and Egypt are modern. And still the savage retreats and the white man advances.

I have the following account of some relics in my possession which were brought from Taunton [?] in Bristol County. A field which had been planted with corn for many years. The sod being broken, the wind began to blow away the soil and then the sand, for several years, until at length it was blown away to the depth of several feet, where it ceased, and the ground appeared strewed with the remains of an Indian village, with regular circles of stones which formed the foundation of their wigwams, and numerous implements beside.

Commonly we use life sparingly, we husband it as if it were scarce, and admit the right of prudence; but occasionally we see how ample and inexhaustible is the stock from which we so scantily draw, and learn that we need not be prudent, that we may be prodigal, and all expenses will be met.

Am I not as far from those scenes, though I have wandered a different route, as my companion who has

finished the voyage of life? Am I not most dead who have not life to die, and cast off my sere leaves?

It seemed the only right way to enter this country, borne on the bosom of the flood which receives the tribute of its innumerable vales. The river was the only key adequate to unlock its maze. We beheld the hills and valleys, the lakes and streams, in their natural order and position.

A state should be a complete epitome of the earth, a natural principality, and by the gradations of its surface and soil conduct the traveller to its principal marts. Nature is stronger than law, and the sure but slow influence of wind and water will balk the efforts of restricting legislatures. Man cannot set up bounds with safety but where the revolutions of nature will confirm and strengthen, not obliterate, them.

Every man's success is in proportion to his *average* ability. The meadow flowers spring and bloom where the waters annually deposit their slime, not where they reach in some freshet only. We seem to do ourselves little credit in our own eyes for our performance, which all know must ever fall short of our aspiration and promise, which only we can know entirely; as a stick will avail to reach further than it will strike effectually, since its greatest momentum is a little short of its extreme end. But we do not disappoint our neighbors. A man is not his hope nor his despair, nor his past deed.[1]

[1] [*Week*, p. 133; Riv. 166.]

But it is in the order of destiny that whatever is remote shall be near. Whatever the eyes see, the hands shall touch. The sentinels upon the turret and at the window and on the wall behold successively the approaching traveller whom the host will soon welcome in the hall.

It is not to be forgotten that the poet is innocent; but he is young, he is not yet a parent or a brother to his race. There are a thousand degrees of grace and beauty before absolute humanity and disinterestedness.

The meanest man can easily test the noblest. Is he embraced? Does he find him a brother?

I am sometimes made aware of a kindness which may have long since been shown, which surely memory cannot retain, which reflects its light long after its heat. I realize, my friend, that there have been times when thy thoughts of me have been of such lofty kindness that they passed over me like the winds of heaven unnoticed, so pure that they presented no object to my eyes, so generous and universal that I did not detect them. Thou hast loved me for what I was not, but for what I aspired to be. We shudder to think of the kindness of our friend which has fallen on us cold, though in some true but tardy hour we have awakened. There has just reached me the kindness of some acts, not to be forgotten, not to be remembered. I wipe off these scores at midnight, at rare intervals, in moments of insight and gratitude.

Far o'er the bow,
Amid the drowsy noon,
Souhegan, creeping slow,
Appeareth soon.[1]

Methinks that by a strict behavior
I could elicit back the brightest star
That hides behind a cloud.

I have rolled near some other spirit's path,
And with a pleased anxiety have felt
Its purer influence on my opaque mass,
But always was I doomed to learn, alas!
I had scarce changèd its sidereal time.

Gray sedulously cultivated poetry, but the plant would not thrive. His life seems to have needed some more sincere and ruder experience.

Occasionally we rowed near enough to a cottage to see the sunflowers before the door, and the seed-vessels of the poppy, like small goblets filled with the waters of Lethe, but without disturbing the sluggish household. Driving the small sandpiper before us.

FOG [2]

Thou drifting meadow of the air,
Where bloom the daisied banks and violets,

[1] [The first four lines of a poem the rest of which appears on pp. 234, 235 of *Week* (Riv. 290, 291).]

[2] [This poem appears, slightly abridged and altered, in *Week*, p. 201 (Riv. 249).]

And in whose fenny labyrinths
The bittern booms and curlew peeps,
The heron wades and boding rain-crow clucks;
Low-anchored cloud,
Newfoundland air,
Fountain-head and source of rivers,
Ocean branch that flowest to the sun,
Diluvian spirit, or Deucalion shroud,
Dew-cloth, dream drapery,
And napkin spread by fays,
Spirit of lakes and seas and rivers,
Sea-fowl that with the east wind
Seek'st the shore, groping thy way inland,
By whichever name I please to call thee,
Bear only perfumes and the scent
Of healing herbs to just men's fields.

I am amused with the manner in which Quarles and his contemporary poets speak of Nature, — with a sort of gallantry, as a knight of his lady, — not as lovers, but as having a thorough respect for her and some title to her acquaintance. They speak manfully, and their lips are not closed by affection.

"The pale-faced lady of the black-eyed night."

Nature seems to have held her court then, and all authors were her gentlemen and esquires and had ready an abundance of courtly expressions.

Quarles is never weak or shallow, though coarse and untasteful. He presses able-bodied and strong-backed words into his service, which have a certain rustic fragrance and force, as if now first devoted to literature

after having served sincere and stern uses. He has the pronunciation of a poet though he stutters. He certainly speaks the English tongue with a right manly accent. To be sure his poems have the[1] musty odor of a confessional.

How little curious is man,
Who hath not searched his mystery a span,
But dreams of mines of treasure
Which he neglects to measure,
For threescore years and ten
Walks to and fro amid his fellow men
O'er this small tract of continental land,
His fancy bearing no divining wand.
Our uninquiring corpses lie more low
Than our life's curiosity doth go;
Our most ambitious steps climb not so high
As in their hourly sport the sparrows fly.
Yonder cloud 's blown farther in a day
Than our most vagrant feet may ever stray.
Surely, O Lord, he hath not greatly erred
Who hath so little from his birthplace stirred.
He wanders through this low and shallow world,
Scarcely his bolder thoughts and hopes unfurled,
Through this low wallèd world, which his huge sin
Hath hardly room to rest and harbor in.
Bearing his head just o'er some fallow ground,
Some cowslip'd meadows where the bitterns sound,
He wanders round until his end draws nigh,

[1] [There is a blank space here before "musty," as if Thoreau had sought another adjective to go with it.]

And then lays down his aged head to die.
And this is life! this is that famous strife!
His head doth court a fathom from the land,
Six feet from where his grovelling feet do stand.

What is called talking is a remarkable though I believe universal phenomenon of human society. The most constant phenomenon when men or women come together is talking. A chemist might try this experiment in his laboratory with certainty, and set down the fact in his journal. This characteristic of the race may be considered as established. No doubt every one can call to mind numerous conclusive instances. Some nations, it is true, are said to articulate more distinctly than others; yet the rule holds with those who have the fewest letters in their alphabet. Men cannot stay long together without talking, according to the rules of polite society. (As all men have two ears and but one tongue, they must spend the extra and unavoidable hours of silence in listening to the whisperings of genius, and this fact it is that makes silence always respectable in my eyes.) Not that they have anything to communicate, or do anything quite natural or important to be done so, but by common consent they fall to using the invention of speech, and make a conversation, good or bad. They say things, first this one and then that. They express their "opinions," as they are called.

By a well-directed silence I have sometimes seen threatening and troublesome people routed. You sit musing as if you were in broad nature again. They cannot stand it. Their position becomes more and

more uncomfortable every moment. So much humanity over against one without any disguise, — not even the disguise of speech! They cannot stand it nor sit against it.

Not only must men talk, but for the most part must talk about talk, — even about books, or dead and buried talk. Sometimes my friend expects a few periods from me. Is he exorbitant? He thinks it is my turn now. Sometimes my companion thinks he has said a good thing, but I don't see the difference. He looks just as he did before. Well, it is no loss. I suppose he has plenty more.

Then I have seen very near and intimate, very old friends introduced by very old strangers, with liberty given to talk. The stranger, who knows only the countersign, says, "Jonas — Eldred," giving those names which will make a title good in a court of law. (It may be presumed that God does not know the Christian names of men.) Then Jonas, like a ready soldier, makes a remark, — a benediction on the weather it may be, — and Eldred swiftly responds, and unburdens his breast, and so the action begins. They bless God and nature many times gratuitously, and part mutually well pleased, leaving their cards. They did not happen to be present at each other's christening.

Sometimes I have listened so attentively and with so much interest to the whole expression of a man that I did not hear one word he was saying, and saying too with the more vivacity observing my attention.

But a man may be an object of interest to me though his tongue is pulled out by the roots.

Men sometimes do as if they could eject themselves like bits of pack-thread from the end of the tongue.

Scholars have for the most part a diseased way of looking at the world. They mean by it a few cities and unfortunate assemblies of men and women, who might all be concealed in the grass of the prairies. They describe this world as old or new, healthy or diseased, according to the state of their libraries, — a little dust more or less on their shelves. When I go abroad from under this shingle or slate roof, I find several things which they have not considered. Their conclusions seem imperfect.

As with two eyes we see and with two ears we hear, with the like advantage is man added to man. Making no complaint, offering no encouragement, one human being is made aware of the neighboring and contemporaneous existence of another. Such is the tenderness of friendship. We never recognize each other as finite and imperfect beings, but with a smile and as strangers. My intercourse with men is governed by the same laws with my intercourse with nature.

Buonaparte said that the three-o'clock-in-the-morning courage was the rarest, but I cannot agree with him.[1] Fear does not awake so early. Few men are so degenerate as to balk nature by not beginning the day well.

I hold in my hands a recent volume of essays and

[1] [See *Excursions*, p. 208 ; Riv. 255.]

poems, in its outward aspect like the thousands which the press sends forth, and, if the gods permitted their own inspiration to be breathed in vain, this might be forgotten in the mass, but the accents of truth are as sure to be heard on earth as in heaven. The more I read it the more I am impressed by its sincerity, its depth and grandeur. It already seems ancient and has lost the traces of its modern birth. It is an evidence of many virtues in the writer. More serenely and humbly confident, this man has listened to the inspiration which all may hear, and with greater fidelity reported it. It is therefore a true prophecy, and shall at length come to pass. It has the grandeur of the Greek tragedy, or rather its Hebrew original, yet it is not necessarily referred to any form of faith. The slumbering, heavy depth of its sentences is perhaps without recent parallel. It lies like the sward in its native pasture, where its roots are never disturbed, and not spread over a sandy embankment.

On fields o'er which the reaper's hand has passed,
Lit by the harvest moon and autumn sun,
My thoughts like stubble floating in the wind
And of such fineness as October airs,
There, after harvest, could I glean my life,
A richer harvest reaping without toil,
And weaving gorgeous fancies at my will,
In subtler webs than finest summer haze.

In October the air is really the fine element the poets describe.[1] The fields emit a dry and temperate

[1] [*Week*, p. 377; Riv. 465.]

odor. There is something in the refined and elastic air which reminds us of a work of art. It is like a verse of Anacreon or a tragedy of Æschylus.

All parts of nature belong to one head, as the curls of a maiden's hair. How beautifully flow the seasons as one year, and all streams as one ocean!

I hate museums; there is nothing so weighs upon my spirits. They are the catacombs of nature. One green bud of spring, one willow catkin, one faint trill from a migrating sparrow would set the world on its legs again. The life that is in a single green weed is of more worth than all this death. They are dead nature collected by dead men. I know not whether I muse most at the bodies stuffed with cotton and sawdust or those stuffed with bowels and fleshy fibre outside the cases.

Where is the proper herbarium, the true cabinet of shells, and museum of skeletons, but in the meadow where the flower bloomed, by the seaside where the tide cast up the fish, and on the hills and in the valleys where the beast laid down its life and the skeleton of the traveller reposes on the grass? What right have mortals to parade these things on their legs again, with their wires, and, when heaven has decreed that they shall return to dust again, to return them to sawdust? Would you have a dried specimen of a world, or a pickled one?

Embalming is a sin against heaven and earth, — against heaven, who has recalled the soul and set free the servile elements, and against the earth, which is

thus robbed of her dust. I have had my right-perceiving senses so disturbed in these haunts as to mistake a veritable living man for a stuffed specimen, and surveyed him with dumb wonder as the strangest of the whole collection. For the strangest is that which, being in many particulars most like, is in some essential particular most unlike.

It is one great and rare merit in the old English tragedy that it says something. The words slide away very fast, but toward some conclusion. It has to do with things, and the reader feels as if he were advancing. It does not make much odds what message the author has to deliver at this distance of time, since no message can startle us, but how he delivers it, — that it be done in a downright and manly way. They come to the point and do not waste the time.

They say that Carew was a laborious writer, but his poems do not show it. They are finished, but do not show the marks of the chisel. Drummond was indeed a quiddler, with little fire or fibre, and rather a taste *for* poetry than a taste *of* it.

After all, we draw on very gradually in English literature to Shakespeare, through Peele and Marlowe, to say nothing of Raleigh and Spenser and Sidney. We hear the same great tone already sounding to which Shakespeare added a serener wisdom and clearer expression. Its chief characteristics of reality and unaffected manliness are there. The more we read of the

literature of those times, the more does acquaintance divest the genius of Shakespeare of the in some measure false mystery which has thickened around it, and leave it shrouded in the grander mystery of daylight. His critics have for the most part made their [*sic*] contemporaries less that they might make Shakespeare more.

The distinguished men of those times had a great flow of spirits, a cheerful and elastic wit far removed from the solemn wisdom of later days. What another thing was fame and a name then than now! This is seen in the familiar manner in which they were spoken of by each other and the nation at large, — *Kit* Marlowe, and *George* (Peele), and *Will* Shakespeare, and *Ben* Jonson, — great *fellows*, — *chaps*.

We pass through all degrees of life from the least organic to the most complex. Sometimes we are mere pudding-stone and scoriæ.

The present is the instant work and near process of living, and will be found in the last analysis to be nothing more nor less than digestion. Sometimes, it is true, it is indigestion.

Daniel deserves praise for his moderation, and sometimes has risen into poetry before you know it. Strong sense appears in his epistles, but you have to remember too often in what age he wrote, and yet that Shakespeare was his contemporary. His style is without the tricks of the trade and really in advance of his

age. We can well believe that he was a retired scholar, who would keep himself shut up in his house two whole months together.

Donne was not a poet, but a man of strong sense, a sturdy English thinker, full of conceits and whimsicalities, hammering away at his subject, be it eulogy or epitaph, sonnet or satire, with the patience of a day laborer, without taste but with an occasional fine distinction or poetic phrase. He was rather *Doctor* Donne, than the *poet* Donne. His letters are perhaps best.

Lovelace is what his name expresses, — of slight material to make a poet's fame. His goings and comings are of no great account. His taste is not so much love of excellence as fear of failure, though in one instance he has written fearlessly and memorably.

How wholesome are the natural laws to contemplate, as gravity, heat, light, moisture, dryness. Only let us not interfere. Let the soul withdraw into the chambers of the heart, let the mind reside steadily in the labyrinth of the brain, and not interfere with hands or feet more than with other parts of nature.

Thomson was a true lover of nature and seems to have needed only a deeper human experience to have taken a more vigorous and lofty flight. He is deservedly popular, and has found a place on many shelves and in many cottages. There are great merits in "The Seasons" — and the almanac. In "Autumn:" —

"Attemper'd suns arise,

. . . . . .

. . . while broad and brown, below,
Extensive harvests hang the heavy head.
Rich, silent, deep, they stand."

The moon in "Autumn:"—

"Her spotted disk,
Where mountains rise, umbrageous dales descend,

. . . . . .

. . . gives all his blaze again,
Void of its flame, and sheds a softer day.
Now through the passing cloud she seems to stoop,
Now up the pure cerulean rides sublime.

. . . . . .

The whole air whitens with a boundless tide
Of silver radiance, trembling round the world."

My friend, thou art not of some other race and family of men;—thou art flesh of my flesh, bone of my bone. Has not nature associated us in many ways? [1] Water from the same fountain, lime from the same quarry, grain from the same field compose our bodies. And perchance our elements but reassert their ancient kindredship. Is it of no significance that I have so long partaken of the same loaf with thee, have breathed the same air summer and winter, have felt the same heat and cold, the same fruits of summer have been pleased to refresh us both, and thou hast never had a thought of different fibre from my own? [2]

Our kindred, of one blood with us. With the favor and not the displeasure of the gods, we have partaken the same bread.

[1] [*Week*, p. 302; Riv. 375.] [2] [*Week*, p. 302; Riv. 375.]

It is hard to know rocks. They are crude and inaccessible to our nature. We have not enough of the stony element in us.

It is hard to know men by rumor only. But to stand near somewhat living and conscious. Who would not sail through mutiny and storm farther than Columbus, to reach the fabulous retreating shores of some continent man?

My friend can only be in any measure my foe, because he is fundamentally my friend; for everything is after all more nearly what it should rightfully be, than that which it is simply by failing to be the other.

It [friendship] cannot be the subject of reconciliation or the theme of conversation ever between friends. The true friend must in some sense disregard all professions of friendship and forget them.

It is as far from pity as from contempt. I should hesitate even to call it the highest sympathy, since the word is of suspicious origin and suggests suffering rather than joy. It was established before religion, for men are not friends in religion, but over and through it; and it records no apostasy or repentance, but there is a certain divine and innocent and perennial health about it.

Its charity is generosity, its virtue nobleness, its religion trust. We come nearer to friendship with flowers and inanimate objects than with merely affectionate

and loving men. It is not for the friend to be just even, — at least he is not to be lost in this attribute, — but to be only a large and free existence, representative of humanity, its general court. Admirable to us as the heavenly bodies, but like them affording rather a summer heat and daylight, — the light and fire of sunshine and stars, — rather than the intense heats and splendors which our weakness and appetite require.

Yesterday I skated after a fox over the ice. Occasionally he sat on his haunches and barked at me like a young wolf. It made me think of the bear and her cubs mentioned by Captain Parry, I think. All brutes seem to have a genius for mystery, an Oriental aptitude for symbols and the language of signs; and this is the origin of Pilpay and Æsop. The fox manifested an almost human suspicion of mystery in my actions. While I skated directly after him, he cantered at the top of his speed; but when I stood still, though his fear was not abated, some strange but inflexible law of his nature caused him to stop also, and sit again on his haunches. While I still stood motionless, he would go slowly a rod to one side, then sit and bark, then a rod to the other side, and sit and bark again, but did not retreat, as if spellbound. When, however, I commenced the pursuit again, he found himself released from his durance.

Plainly the fox belongs to a different order of things from that which reigns in the village. Our courts, though they offer a bounty for his hide, and our pulpits, though they draw many a moral from his cunning, are in few senses contemporary with his free forest life.

To the poet considered as an artist, his words must be as the relation of his oldest and finest memory, and wisdom derived from the remotest experience.

I have thought, when walking in the woods through a certain retired dell, bordered with shrub oaks and pines, far from the village and affording a glimpse only through an opening of the mountains in the horizon, how my life might pass there, simple and true and natural, and how many things would be impossible to be done there. How many books I might not read!

Why avoid my friends and live among strangers? Why not reside in my native country?

Many a book is written which does not necessarily suggest or imply the phenomenon or object to explain which it professes to have been written.

Every child should be encouraged to study not man's system of nature but nature's.

Giles Fletcher knew how to write, and has left English verses behind. He is the most valuable imitator of the Spenserian stanza, and adds a moral tone of his own.

TO A MARSH HAWK IN SPRING

There is health in thy gray wing,
Health of nature's furnishing.
Say, thou modern-winged antique,
Was thy mistress ever sick?

In each heaving of thy wing
Thou dost health and leisure bring,
Thou dost waive disease and pain
And resume new life again.

Man walks in nature still alone,
  And knows no one,
Discovers no lineament nor feature
  Of any creature.

Though all the firmament
  Is o'er me bent,
Yet still I miss the grace
  Of an intelligent and kindred face.

I still must seek the friend
Who does with nature blend.
Who is the person in her mask,
He is the friend I ask;

Who is the expression of her meaning,
Who is the uprightness of her leaning,
Who is the grown child of her weaning.

We twain would walk together
  Through every weather,
And see this aged Nature
  Go with a bending stature.

The centre of this world,
The face of Nature,

The site of human life,
Some sure foundation
And nucleus of a nation,
At least, a private station.

It is the saddest thought of all, that what we are to others, that we are much more to ourselves, — avaricious, mean, irascible, affected, — we are the victims of these faults. If our pride offends our humble neighbor, much more does it offend ourselves, though our lives are never so private and solitary.

If the Indian is somewhat of a stranger in nature, the gardener is too much a familiar. There is something vulgar and foul in the latter's closeness to his mistress, something noble and cleanly in the former's distance. Yet the hunter seems to have a property in the moon which even the farmer has not. Ah! the poet knows uses of plants which are not easily reported, though he cultivates no parterre. See how the sun smiles on him while he walks in the gardener's aisles, rather than on the gardener.

Not only has the foreground of a picture its glass of transparent crystal spread over it, but the picture itself is a glass or transparent medium to a remoter background. We demand only of all pictures that they be perspicuous, that the laws of perspective have been truly observed. It is not the fringed foreground of the desert nor the intermediate oases that detain the eye and the imagination, but the infinite, level, and roomy horizon, where the sky meets the sand, and heavens and

earth, the ideal and actual, are coincident, the background into which leads the path of the pilgrim.

All things are in revolution; it is the one law of nature by which order is preserved, and time itself lapses and is measured. Yet some things men will do from age to age, and some things they will not do.

"Fisherman's Acct. for 1805 [1] Began March 25

			cts.
	D^{d}	Mr. Saml Potter 2 q^{ts} W I 3/ 1 lb sugar 10^{d}	$0.64
		One Cod line 5/	84
April	8	Q^{t} W I 1/6 & 1 lb Sugar 10^{d} & Brown Mug	48
	9	Q^{t} N E rum 1/ 10th D^{o}. of D^{o} 1/	33
	13	Q^{t} N E rum & 1 lb Sugar 15th 2 Q^{ts} N E rum 2/	62
	17	Q^{t} W I 1/6 D^{o} N E 1/ lb Sugar 9^{d} & Q^{t} N E Rum	71
	22	Q^{t} N E rum 1/ lb sugar 9^{d} & Q^{t} N E rum 1/	44½
	23	Q^{t} N E rum 1/ D^{o} of D^{o} & sugar 5^{d}	39
	24	Q^{t} N E rum 1/ lb sugar 9^{d}	28½
	29	Q^{t} N E rum 1/ & lb sugar 9^{d}—30th Rum 1/	44½
May	first	Q^{t} rum ½ lb Sugar 1/5^{d}	22
		Q^{t} N E rum 1/ & ½ lb Loaf Sugar 9^{d}	29
	4	Q^{t} rum 1/ Sugar 5^{d}	22
	6	Q^{t} N E rum 1/ & lb good sugar 11^{d}	31
	7	Q^{t} N E rum 1/ 8th Q^{t} N E rum 1/ & ½ lb Sugar 5^{d}.	40
	11	Q^{t} N E rum 11^{d} lb Sugar 10^{d}	29
	15	Q^{t} rum & lb Sugar 1/9 & Q^{t} N E rum	44
	16	To a Line for the Sceene 3/	0.50
	20	To Q^{t} N E rum 11^{d} lb Sugar 10^{d}	0.29
	21	To Q^{t} N E rum 11^{d} & lb Sugar 10^{d}	0.29
	27	To Q^{t} W I 1/6 & lb Sugar 10^{d}	0.39
June	5th	1805 Settled this acc^{t} by Recev.g Cash in Full	$8.82½

How many young finny contemporaries of various character and destiny, form and habits, we have even

[1] [See *Week*, pp. 33, 34; Riv. 41, 42.]

in this water! And it will not be forgotten by some memory that we *were* contemporaries. It is of *some* import. We shall be some time friends, I trust, and know each other better. Distrust is too prevalent now. We are so much alike! have so many faculties in common! I have not yet met with the philosopher who could, in a quite conclusive, undoubtful way, show me *the*, and, if not *the*, then how *any*, difference between man and a fish. We are so much alike! How much could a really tolerant, patient, humane, and truly great and natural man make of them, if he should try? For they are to be understood, surely, as all things else, by no other method than that of sympathy. It is easy to say what they are not to us, *i. e.*, what we are not to them; but what we might and ought to be is another affair.

In the tributaries the brook minnow and the trout. Even in the rills emptying into the river, over which you stride at a step, you may see small trout not so large as your finger glide past or hide under the bank.

The character of this [the horned pout], as indeed of all fishes, depends directly upon that of the water it inhabits, those taken in clear and sandy water being of brighter hue and cleaner and of firmer and sweeter flesh. It makes a peculiar squeaking noise when drawn out, which has given it the name of the minister or preacher.

The bream is the familiar and homely sparrow, which makes her nest everywhere, and is early and late.

The pickerel is the hawk, a fish of prey, hovering over the finny broods.

The pout is the owl, which steals so noiselessly about at evening with its clumsy body.

The shiner is the summer yellowbird, or goldfinch, of the river.

The sucker is the sluggish bittern, or stake-driver.

The minnow is the hummingbird.

The trout is the partridge woodpecker.

The perch is the robin.[1]

We read Marlowe as so much poetical pabulum. It is food for poets, water from the Castalian Spring, some of the atmosphere of Parnassus, raw and crude indeed, and at times breezy, but pure and bracing. Few have so rich a phrase! He had drunk deep of the Pierian Spring, though not deep enough, and had that fine madness, as Drayton says,

"Which justly should possess a poet's brain."

We read his "Dr. Faustus," "Dido, Queen of Carthage," and "Hero and Leander," especially the last, without being wearied. He had many of the qualities of a great poet, and was in some degree worthy to precede Shakespeare. But he seems to have run to waste for want of seclusion and solitude, as if mere pause and deliberation would have added a new element of greatness to his poetry. In his unquestionably fine, heroic tone it would seem as if he had the rarest part of genius, and education could have added the rest. The "Hero

[1] [This appears in pencil on a loose sheet of paper inclosed between the pages of the Journal.]

and Leander" tells better for his character than the anecdotes which survive.

I fain would stretch me by the highway-side,
To thaw and trickle with the melting snow,
That mingled soul and body with the tide
I too might through the pores of Nature flow,[1]

Might help to forward the new spring along,
If it were mine to choose my toil or day,
Scouring the roads with yonder sluice-way throng,
And so work out my tax on *Her* highway.

Yet let us thank the purblind race
Who still have thought it good
With lasting stone to mark the place
Where braver men have stood.

In Concord, town of quiet name
And quiet fame as well, . . .

I've seen ye, sisters, on the mountain-side,
When your green mantles fluttered in the wind;
I've seen your footprints on the lake's smooth shore,
Lesser than man's, a more ethereal trace;
I have heard of ye as some far-famed race,
Daughters of gods, whom I should one day meet,
Or mothers, I might say, of all our race.
I reverence your natures, so like mine
Yet strangely different, like but still unlike.
Thou only stranger that hast crossed my path,

[1] [*Excursions, and Poems*, p. 409. See also p. 71.]

Accept my hospitality; let me hear
The message which thou bring'st.
Made different from me,
Perchance thou 'rt made to be
The creature of a different destiny.
I know not who ye are that meekly stand
Thus side by side with man in every land.
When did ye form alliance with our race,
Ye children of the moon, who in mild nights
Vaulted upon the hills and sought this earth?
Reveal that which I fear ye cannot tell,
Wherein ye are not I, wherein ye dwell
Where I can never come.
What boots it that I do regard ye so?
Does it make suns to shine or crops to grow?
What boots [it] that I never should forget
That I have sisters sitting for me yet?
And what are sisters?
The robust man, who can so stoutly strive,
In this bleak world is hardly kept alive.
And who is it protects *ye*, smooths *your* way?

We can afford to lend a willing ear occasionally to those earnest reformers of the age. Let us treat them hospitably. Shall we be charitable only to the poor? What though they are fanatics? Their errors are likely to be generous errors, and these may be they who will put to rest the American Church and the American government, and awaken better ones in their stead.

Let us not meanly seek to maintain our delicate lives in chambers or in legislative halls by a timid watchful-

ness of the rude mobs that threaten to pull down our baby-houses. Let us not think to raise a revenue which shall maintain our domestic quiet by an impost on the liberty of speech. Let us not think to live by the principle of self-defense. Have we survived our accidents hitherto, think you, by virtue of our good swords, — that three-foot lath that dangles by your side, or those brazen-mouthed pieces under the burying hill which the trainers keep to hurrah with in the April and July mornings? Do our protectors burrow under the burying-ground hill, on the edge of the bean-field which you all know, gorging themselves once a year with powder and smoke, and kept bright and in condition by a chafing of oiled rags and rotten stone? Have we resigned the protection of our hearts and civil liberties to that feathered race of wading birds and marching men who drill but once a month? — and I mean no reproach to our Concord train-bands, who certainly make a handsome appearance — and dance well. Do we enjoy the sweets of domestic life undisturbed, because the naughty boys are all shut up in that whitewashed "stone-yard," as it is called, and see the Concord meadows only through a grating.

No, let us live amid the free play of the elements. Let the dogs bark, let the cocks crow, and the sun shine, and the winds blow!

> Ye do commend me to all virtue ever,
> And simple truth, the law by which we live.
> Methinks that I can trust your clearer sense
> And your immediate knowledge of the truth.
> I would obey your influence, one with fate.

There is a true march to the sentence, as if a man or a body of men were actually making progress there step by step, and these are not the mere *disjecta membra*, the dispersed and mutilated members though it were of heroes, which can no longer walk and join themselves to their comrades. They are not perfect nor liberated pieces of art for the galleries, yet they stand on the natural and broad pedestal of the living rock, but have a principle of life and growth in them still, as has that human nature from which they spring.[1]

It is a marvel how the birds contrive to survive in this world. These tender sparrows that flit from bush to bush this evening, though it is so late, do not seem improvident, [but appear] to have found a roost for the night. They must succeed by weakness and reliance, for they are not bold and enterprising, as their mode of life would seem to require, but very weak and tender creatures. I have seen a little chipping sparrow, come too early in the spring, shivering on an apple twig, drawing in its head and striving to warm it in its muffled feathers; and it had no voice to intercede with nature, but peeped as helpless as an infant, and was ready to yield up its spirit and die without any effort. And yet this was no new spring in the revolution of the seasons.

Our offense is rank, it smells to heaven. In the midst of our village, as in most villages, there is a slaughterhouse, and throughout the summer months, day and

[1] [Here follows matter printed on pp. 105, 106 of *Week* (Riv. 130–132).]

night, to the distance of half a mile, which embraces the greater part of the village, the air [is] filled with such scents as we instinctively avoid in a woodland walk; and doubtless, if our senses were once purified and educated by a simpler and truer life, we should not consent to live in such a neighborhood.

George Melvin, our Concord trapper, told me that in going to the spring near his house, where he kept his minnows for bait, he found that they were all gone, and immediately suspected that a mink had got them; so he removed the snow all around and laid open the trail of a mink underneath, which he traced to his hole, where were the fragments of his booty. There he set his trap, and baited it with fresh minnows. Going again soon to the spot, he found one of the mink's fore legs in the trap gnawed off near the body, and, having set it again, he caught the mink with his three legs, the fourth having only a short bare bone sticking out.

When I expressed some surprise at this, and said that I heard of such things but did not know whether to believe them, and was now glad to have the story confirmed, said he: "Oh, the muskrats are the greatest fellows to gnaw their legs off. Why I caught one once that had just gnawed his third leg off, this being the third time he had been trapped; and he lay dead by the trap, for he could n't run on one leg." Such tragedies are enacted even in this sphere and along our peaceful streams, and dignify at least the hunter's trade. Only courage does anywhere prolong life, whether of man or beast.

When they are caught by the leg and cannot get into the water to drown themselves, they very frequently gnaw the limb off. They are commonly caught under water or close to the edge, and dive immediately with the trap and go to gnawing and are quackled and drowned in a moment, though under other circumstances they will live several minutes under water. They prefer to gnaw off a fore leg to a hind leg, and do not gnaw off their tails. He says the wharf rats are very common on the river and will swim and cross it like a muskrat, and will gnaw their legs and even their tails off in the trap.

These would be times that tried men's souls, if men had souls to be tried; aye, and the souls of brutes, for they must have souls as well as teeth. Even the water-rats lead sleepless nights and live Achillean lives. There are the strong will and the endeavor. Man, even the hunter, naturally has sympathy with every brave effort, even in his game, to maintain that life it enjoys. The hunter regards with awe his game, and it becomes at last his medicine.[1]

Of Cadew or Case worms there are the Ruff-coats or Cockspurs, whose cases are rough and made of various materials, and the Piper Cadis or Straw-worm, made of reed or rush, and straight and smooth.

Carlyle's works are not to be studied, — hardly re-read. Their first impression is the truest and the deepest. There is no reprint. If you look again, you will be dis-

[1] [See *Journal*, vol. vi, Feb. 5, 1854.]

appointed and find nothing answering to the mood they have excited. They are true natural products in this respect. All things are but once, and never repeated. The first faint blushes of the morning gilding the mountain-tops, with the pale phosphorus and saffron-colored clouds, — they verily transport us to the morning of creation; but what avails it to travel eastward, or look again there an hour hence. We should be as far in the day ourselves, mounting toward our meridian. There is no *double entendre* for the alert reader; in fact the work was designed for such complete success that it serves but for a single occasion. It is the luxury of wealth and art when for every deed its own instrument is manufactured. The knife which sliced the bread of Jove ceased to be a knife when that service was rendered.

For every inferior, earthly pleasure we forego, a superior, celestial one is substituted.

To purify our lives requires simply to weed out what is foul and noxious and the sound and innocent is supplied, as nature purifies the blood if we will but reject impurities.

Nature and human life are as various to our several experiences as our constitutions are various. Who shall say what prospect life offers to another? Could a greater miracle take place than if we should look through each other's eyes for an instant? We should live in all the ages of the world in an hour, — aye, in all the worlds of the ages. What I have read of rhapsodists, of the primitive poets, Argonautic expeditions, the life of demigods and heroes, Eleusinian mysteries, etc., sug-

gests nothing so ineffably grand and informing as this would be.

The phœbe came into my house to find a place for its nest, flying through the windows.

It was a bright thought, that of man's to have bells; no doubt the birds hear them with pleasure.

To compete with the squirrels in the chestnut harvest, picking ofttimes the nuts that bear the mark of their teeth.

I require of any lecturer that he will read me a more or less simple and sincere account of his own life, of what he has done and thought, — not so much what he has read or heard of other men's lives and actions, but some such account as he would send to his kindred from a distant land, — and if he has lived sincerely, it must have been in a distant land to me, — describing even his outward circumstances and what adventures he has had, as well as his thoughts and feelings about them. He who gives us only the results of other men's lives, though with brilliant temporary success, we may in some measure justly accuse of having defrauded us of our time. We want him to give us that which was most precious to him, — not his life's blood but even that for which his life's blood circulated, what he has got by living. If anything ever yielded him pure pleasure or instruction, let him communicate it. Let the money-getter tell us how much he loves wealth, and what means he takes

to accumulate it. He must describe those facts which he knows and loves better than anybody else. He must not write on foreign missions. The mechanic will naturally lecture about his trade, the farmer about his farm, and every man about that which he, compared with other men, knows best. Yet incredible mistakes are made. I have heard an owl lecture with perverse show of learning upon the solar microscope, and chanticleer upon nebulous stars, when both ought to have been sound asleep, the one in a hollow tree, the other on his roost.

After I lectured here before, this winter, I heard that some of my townsmen had expected of me some account of my life at the pond. This I will endeavor to give to-night.

I know a robust and hearty mother who thinks that her son, who died abroad, came to his end by living too low, as she had since learned that he drank only water. Men are not inclined to leave off hanging men to-day, though they will be to-morrow. I heard of a family in Concord this winter which would have starved, if it had not been for potatoes — and tea and coffee.

It has not been my design to live cheaply, but only to live as I could, not devoting much time to getting a living. I made the most of what means were already got.

To determine the character of our life and how adequate it is to its occasion, just try it by any test, as for instance that this same sun is seen in Europe and in

America at the same time, that these same stars are visible in twenty-four hours to two thirds the inhabitants of the globe, and who knows how many and various inhabitants of the universe. What farmer in his field lives according even to this somewhat trivial material fact.

I just looked up at a fine twinkling star and thought that a voyager whom I know, now many days' sail from this coast, might possibly be looking up at that same star with me. The stars are the apexes of what triangles! There is always the possibility — the possibility, I say — of being *all*, or remaining a particle, in the universe.

In these days and in this country, a few implements, as the axe, shovel, etc., and, to the studious, light and stationery and access to a few books, will rank next to necessaries, but can all be obtained at a very trifling cost. Under the head of clothing is to be ranked bedding, or night-clothes.

We are very anxious to keep the animal heat in us. What pains we take with our beds! robbing the nests of birds and their breasts, this shelter within a shelter, as the mole has a bed of leaves and grass at the end of its burrow.

In the summer I caught fish occasionally in the pond, but since September have not missed them.

In a man or his work, over all special excellence or failure, prevails the general authority or value.

Almost any man knows how to earn money, but not one in a million knows how to spend it. If he had known so much as this, he would never have earned it.

All matter, indeed, is capable of entertaining thought.

The complete subjugation of the body to the mind prophesies the sovereignty of the latter over the whole of nature. The instincts are to a certain extent a sort of independent nobility, of equal date with the mind, or crown, — ancient dukes and princes of the regal blood. They are perhaps the mind of our ancestors subsided in us, the experience of the race.

A small sum would really do much good, if the donor spent himself with it and did not merely relinquish it to some distant society whose managers do the good or the evil with it. How much might be done for this town with a hundred dollars! I could provide a select course of lectures for the summer or winter with that sum, which would be an incalculable benefit to every inhabitant. With a thousand dollars I could purchase for this town a more complete and select library than exists in the State out of Cambridge and Boston, perhaps a more available one than any. Men sit palsied and helpless by the side of their buried treasures.[1]

After all those who do most good with money, do it with the least, because they can do better than to acquire it.

March 13, 1846. The song sparrow and blackbird

[1] [See *Walden*, pp. 120, 121; Riv. 171, 172.]

heard to-day. The snow going off. The ice in the pond one foot thick.

Men talk much of coöperation nowadays, of working together to some worthy end; but what little cooperation there is, is as if it were not, being a simple result of which the means are hidden, a harmony inaudible to men. If a man has faith, he will coöperate with equal faith everywhere. If he has not faith he will continue to live like the rest of the world, whatever company he is joined to. To coöperate thoroughly implies to get your living together. I heard it proposed lately that two young men should travel together over the world, the one earning his means as he went, the other carrying a bill of exchange in his pocket. It was easy to see that they could not long be companions, or cooperate, since one would not operate at all. They would part company at the first and most interesting crisis in their adventures.

END OF VOLUME I

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